



Ricardo Garcés Velasco

The Cinema's Deterritorializing Potential and its Philosophical Contagion

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Main supervisor: Dr. Jonathan Pollock

Second supervisor: Dr. Maria Irene Aparicio

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To mom, the everlasting impulse in this shifting world

Abstract

The present dissertation develops a comparative analysis of *The Shape of Water* (Guillermo del Toro, 2017); *Ponyo* (Hayao Miyazaki, 2008); and *A Scene at the Sea* (Takeshi Kitano 1991), to establish the way cinema, through its particular use of images and technological potential can relate to philosophical concepts. The project first focuses on the manner Deleuze and Guattari's notion of becoming itself runs within these three films narrative content in the form of a becoming-animal, becoming-girl and becoming-imperceptible. Then, it analyses the formal aspects of determined sequences as an endeavour to show the film's movement-image potentiality to provide the experience of the change of milieu and perspective that comes with the process of becoming. By doing so, the research aims to prove that the film's resource and the particular experience it provides works as a powerful way of contagion to express and unfold authentic philosophical thinking with possible existential, ontological, ethical and cultural implications for nowadays pressing matters and multidisciplinary research fields.

Key words: *The shape of water*; *Ponyo*; *A Scene at the Sea*; becoming-animal; becoming-girl; becoming-imperceptible; movement-image; film analysis; contagion; philosophical thinking.

CHAPTER 0. Introduction to the subject and to the research questions

We can be thrown into a becoming by anything at all, by the most unexpected, most insignificant of things. You don't deviate from the majority unless there is a little detail that starts to swell and carries you off.

(Deleuze and Guattari, 2005:292)

Preface

Guillermo del Toro's most recent film *The Shape of Water* (2017) ends with a sequence presenting the leading role's peculiar transformation that not only saves her life but allows her to breathe underneath the water and to be with the amphibious manlike creature she loves. By showing the exact instant where the character's ancient neck scars open into gills with a thought-provoking low angle medium close-up in a floating environment, the film denotes a resonance between physical metamorphosis and a change of perspective. In addition, the sequence's final scene is an extreme long shot of the story's two main characters merged in a hug and surrounded by an aquatic empty landscape. Thus suggesting that the shift process's culmination is not merely a matter of altered body parts but also of changing contexts, environments and ways to be, perceive and understand reality.

However, this example is not the only one of how motion pictures have been approaching and displaying different transformation processes and their multiple implications. Almost a decade before *The Shape of Water*, the anime feature films Studio Ghibli released Hayao Miyazaki's *Ponyo on the Cliff by the Sea* (2008). The story of a red goldfish princess who wishes to become a human after knowing a five-year-old boy. The film focuses on Ponyo's becoming-human journey, showing how it develops alongside with her motivations and the ramifications of such a desire. The moment where Ponyo's will of change provides her with legs and hands, disrupting her restraining water-bubble borders and altering nature's balance, establishes a key progression to analyze and experience the complex shifting relationship between a subject and its milieu.

Likewise, Takeshi Kitano's *A scene at the sea* (1991) incorporates within its plot another exceptional modification affecting somebody. Portraying, from the opening shot, a young deaf

dustman facing the sea's irresistible attraction that leads him to learn how to surf. The motion picture works as the aftermath of the ocean's call, following the hero's steps until the instant when he loses himself in its vastness. Its beginning and its ending, remarking the attachment between the speechless man and his maritime surroundings, are crucial glimpses of and altered sensitivity. Through them, is possible to feel and examine the trace of a passage conveying the loss of humanity and the return into nature's indiscernible essence.

These examples evidence, each with its own style, the filmmaking's remarkable capacity to approach both Nature and societies' continuous and problematic dynamism. The way they encompass the plot with the use of such frames, shots, camera-angles, and backgrounds, suggests that motion pictures can display distinct perceptions of reality. Both the stories' inner storyline and the cinematographic formal aspects, offer the main characters' new point of view through their transformations. By doing so, they also open for the viewer the experience of a different way of being, perceiving and understanding the world.

Through these films' narrative and technical expressions, it is possible to encounter what Deleuze and Guattari, in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* call the becoming itself (2005). To become is a deterritorialization. A subject's chance to shift his position, his shape, the way he perceives and interacts with his environment. A deterritorialization is an "‘anomic’ phenomena pervading societies (...) irreducible dynamisms drawing lines of flight and implying other forms of expression" (Deleuze and Guattari, 2005:237). Therefore is a process in which those who become access to another experience and through it, to another conception and relation with their surroundings.

Moviemaking might be the most accurate way of displaying this deterritorialization so it becomes perceivable. There are specific processes of becoming-animal, becoming-child or becoming-imperceptible embedded within the mentioned samples. Hence, they are a first-hand source to sense and think those "involution of creative" (Deleuze and Guattari 2005:238) progressions without hierarchy. The subjectivities' variations that run beyond a physical metamorphosis, unveiling other ontological, perceptual and existential discernment's levels.

In this context, it is almost impossible to overlook the contemporary cinema's place and potentiality related to, among others, sociological, anthropological, political and aesthetic investigation fields. Yet, it is probably in the frontier between film studies and philosophy

where moviemaking phenomena and those three films, in particular, pose the most riveting interrogations. How and into what extension can scholars consider movies as philosophy? Can they address fundamental issues such as the human being, social relationships or reality's essence? How far could such a metaphysical attitude prolong without leaving aside or underestimating the film's artistic status? From the various humanities, art and cultural areas of knowledge, all these stimulating questions always claim for attention, being an invitation to delve into the complex relationship between motion pictures and conceptual thinking. They are the epistemic core that led to undertake this research exploring the philosophical value that the unique films' experience offers.

Scope of the research and method of investigation

The fundamental aim of the study is to provide theoretical and experiential indications that certain contemporary motion pictures exert as contagion sources for an alternative — even non-human — deterritorialized world's perception. Especially focusing on the particularities and enormous potential of cinematographic images in the sense Deleuze (1986) considers them, as movement-images that can compose an indirect representation of time's duration. The analysis seeks to show the plausible correspondences between the sample films' narrative and both the elements and nuances of Deleuze and Guattari's idea of becoming. Such an approach leads to the examination of how and into what degree the filmmaking's formal procedures influence a subsequent deterritorialization. The possibility to perceive and understand the Otherness' form of feeling and thinking reality.

Selecting cinematographic pieces from the past three decades, from two continents and of a dissimilar genre was paramount to develop the investigation. In particular, because they offer a varied range of stories, conceptions, and techniques within the movie making practice. From this point on, the inquiry and interpretation of the chosen features' transformation key segments, and the manner they become themselves agents of deterritorialization — contagion sources—, places the research on an interdisciplinary field.

As a result, it makes up an effort to contribute to *(1)* understand the motion pictures' importance to communicate through their content and form another way of being and

perceiving. (2) Critical judgment of Deleuze's philosophical and film conceptions applied to current problems and artistic expressions. (3) The discussion about nowadays cinema's political status; (4) works of art's character, social and epistemic role; and (5) the debate about philosophy and films relationship. Among those queries, (1) and (2) are the mainframe that guides this study alongside its fundamental question: *In what ways a film, and the experience it provides, relates to the Deleuzian process of becoming?* As for the other items, they are the transversal axis that nourishes and sheds light on the subject's complexity through specific stages of its development.

To discuss with accuracy these crucial inquiries and topics, the study starts from a descriptive level and follows a predominant Deleuzian conceptual and film comparative analysis. This means to conjugate the French thinker's cinematographic concepts about the image and his thoughtful ideas about becoming, with their correspondences and resonances within the concerned movies. A vast and rich interdisciplinary literature also enriches the research, going from the efforts of well-known philosophers to the most recent film studies applications.

Bearing this in mind, three main chapters articulate the investigation. The first chapter centers on the films' content to analyze and establish how the central characters and their relationships, developing throughout the story's narrative, allow multiple connections with decisive elements of the becoming itself. Something that permits the reader to consider how different becomings — i.e. animal, child and imperceptible — run and work within these motion pictures.

The second chapter focuses on the change of environment and perception that comes with those deterritorializations. A closer look at how, on determined segments, the movies' formal and technical aspects conjugate with the plot to provide the audiences with new perspectives and experiences. In this sense, it dwells on the analysis of deterritorializing perceptions present in the films, such as the Otherness sociopolitical point of view, the aquatic milieu natural perspective, reality's childhood and maternal considerations out of patriarchal and utilitarian hegemonic bias, and the possibility to glimpse Nature's imperceptible essential characteristics.

Finally, the third chapter gathers the previous analysis to elucidate and conclude the different ways in which cinema works as an anomalous deterritorializing agent to unfold authentic philosophical thinking. This part focuses on the experience of the rupture that the films provide through their particular deterritorializations, which leads to a critical judgment of the human being's dominant and established attitudes and/or most unquestionable preconceptions. In this sense, it also constitutes a slight contribution to the study of contemporary cinema's place and potentiality in relation to multidisciplinary existential, ontological, political –ethical–, sociological, anthropologic, artistic, and cultural problems.

CHAPTER 1. Different forms and elements of becoming running through films

1.1 *The Shape of Water* and becoming-animal

The Shape of Water (2017), the latest feature from the Mexican director Guillermo del Toro is a contemporary fairy-tale love story between Elisa (Sally Hawkins), an empathetic and yet melancholic mute cleaning lady and an amphibian humanoid (Doug Jones) brought to the government facilities where she works. Set in Baltimore somewhere in the early 1960s¹ of the twentieth century, the tale starts with a voice-off introducing the plot and then moves on to Elisa's viewpoint. In effect, as the drama unfolds, it immerses the viewer in her working-class quotidian silent world and in her initial bonding attempts with the fish-man; leading to witness the transformation she will end up experiencing once she saves the creature from the agent Strickland's (Michael Shannon) inhuman purposes.

Although the narrative displays the old-fashioned romantic fable pieces in a modern-day setup², the film's innermost nature is about a complex fluctuation. The princess without a voice, the tale of love and loss and the monster who tried to destroy it all (*The Shape of Water* 2017), alongside with other secondary roles; they are flowing in a stimulating rhythm that encompasses them towards an essential change. A peculiar movement that sets in motion once the heroine meets and interacts with the creature striking at first sight as an entirely different living being. Granted that the narrative focuses on Elisa's perspective, *The Shape of Water* hastily conveys her emotional, psychological and existential shift, which culminates with her metamorphosis into an amphibian woman.

The film portrays a story whose characters, dialogues and actions lead to specific relations with what Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari called becoming-animal, "traversing human beings and sweeping them away" (2005:237). The resulting phenomenon of a unique

¹ According to Newman (2018:77) while "some sources say 1962, the film seems to be set in an impossible year – it's 13 years since the Battle of Pusan (which would make it 1963) but the space program is at a stage of sending up dogs and chimps, suggesting it's before Russian and American manned space shots (which began in 1961)."

² "*The Shape of Water*'s form is very classical but the story and the way the elements combine is very new." (del Toro 2018:30)

relationship between, but not only limited to, the human and the animal. A process that implicates multiple opposite beings in Nature; heterogeneities that, as they encounter, go through their selves' transformation as a part of the whole's variation. In such an interaction, one of them acts as the deterritorializing subject, and the other as the deterritorialized one.

Becoming involves heterogeneous subjects: the case of Elisa and the amphibian

In terms of the story's protagonists, what the film shows about them, and the way it does, gives notice of their clear dissemblance. As del Toro explains, "the image is adjective and verb. The verb is the action and what happens. The adjective is how you make use of your lens" (2018:27). His cinematographic language emphasizes the differences between the leading roles and their subjectivities, revealing within the feature two heterogeneities in play. "What governs the visuals and the rhythm of a film is the subject, which tells me about the characters" (del Toro 2018:26). For it is not just about the literature long-paragraphs with personalities and thoughts' descriptions, it is a matter of articulating that with their appearance and their actions in a visual form.

The Shape of Water's introductory scenes allow del Toro to establish almost everything there is to know about Elisa. After the underwater intro with the voice-off, a medium shot provides to the spectator a first glimpse on her as she wakes up. Exposing through a single frame, a woman "roughly 30, but ageless, with child-like eyes, dark, lush hair and a thin, beautiful mouth slightly curved into a satisfied smile" (del Toro and Taylor 2016:1). Then, the camera makes a gentle zoom out into Elisa's daily tasks³. She prepares the bathtub; boils some eggs; pleasures herself; visits her neighbor for breakfast and watches old musicals on the TV. The routine goes on as she passes her work hours cleaning a government facility and listening to her friend Zelda.

Elisa's day-to-day activities and the relationship she has with her close friends are the complementary hints on her personality. Besides the obvious fact, she has no voice and communicates with them through signs, other predominant traits surface thanks to their bond

³ It is hard to skip the poetic simplicity of the idea behind this scene. The still medium shot introduces the character, and as the camera starts the movement, life takes place.

of affection. In the mornings with Gilles, the neighbor, Elisa enjoys musicals to the point of walking through the hall rehearsing dance moves. At work, she listens and gets along Zelda's anecdotes with a smile that points to her tender and empathetic character. The movie's beginning is a delightful brushstroke of the protagonist defining humanity.

The narrative dwells on profiting the film's images for an essential subjectivity's depiction, oscillating between appearance and the inner-self seen through quotidian activities. On Elisa's identity, Degnan Smith proves she "provides us with a new paradigm of engaging with the world with honor and love" (2019:46). This portrayal is identifiable beyond any doubt because of the contrast⁴ occurring with another figure, agent Strickland. He reflects the scientific dominant approach to Nature (Degnan Smith 2019), trying to understand it by dissection to gain some profit out the knowledge it might provide. Here, the method to reveal Strickland's subjectivity with adjectival images and the actions that define him is the same as with Elisa.

However, the most interesting contrast of subjectivities comes more from the amphibian similar to the *Creature from the Black Lagoon* (1954), and all that the images tell about him. While Elisa's primary framing has her lying down to see her visage as she wakes up in her apartment, the creature's opening shot displays an extremity hitting on a restraining compartment full of water. In terms of the appearance, the single frame of this green and blue palm, with the distinctive membrane of the aquatic animals, fulfills the purpose of introducing the character's astonishing corporal difference with humans. Whereas the initial proper meeting between him and the heroine completes the physiognomy's discrepancy. Besides the color and form hinted by the body part, he reveals swimming or standing as a half-fish half-man. A figure portrayed in a brilliant manner with his harsh dark-green-skin sometimes glowing with blue, large eyes closing by horizontal eyelids and an adaptable thorax for breathing in two atmospheres.

The transcendent encounter between Elisa and the creature highlights another significant divergence captured through the frame's composition. As they face each other for the first time, a crystal glass separates them and sets a further contrast between their subjectivities. For it exists a disparity in the way they look like, and on the environments they inhabit. Hence, the

⁴ According to del Toro contrast is the key element in the form (2018:30)

milieu's distinction⁵ becomes clear because of the mise-en-scene both limiting and dividing the subjects' dissimilar realities. Yet, the subtle camera's movement and angle through this sequence are there as a wake-up call, a reminder that alongside other organisms, there is something unusual to note about the world's perception⁶.

In addition, the action speaks about the amphibian's personality. On one side, he can cure humans with his shining touch, as he does with the neighbors' arm and at the end with Elisa's fatal wound. On the other, he behaves with such violence he is able to rip apart Strickland's fingers or eat Gilles' cat. By screening these activities, del Toro creates "an elemental god from a river. So the beauty (...) and the power (...) and the menace of that creature add three more layers" (2017) to his enigmatic and intricate inner self's depiction.

The fish-man oscillating between the divine and the instinctive beast, and the kindhearted woman without a voice spending her days in the cleaning service's routine. Those are the film's heterogeneous leading roles. Intuitively, two physical and essential antithetical beings that, once their path crosses and they get involved with each other, will take part in a becoming process with its own reality and intricacy. Elisa and the amphibian creature are parts of the Bergsonian duration; the Whole's uninterrupted transformation (Deleuze 1986)⁷ encompassing within it, opposite subjectivities into their own deterritorializations.

These heterogeneities affecting one another are a part of the always-connected becomings that characterizes a rhizome. As Deleuze and Guattari point out, a becoming-wasp of the orchid and a becoming-orchid of the wasp, bring about the deterritorialization of one term and the reterritorialization of the other (2005:10)⁸. Then, the deterritorialization is the shift in which differing subjects become while approaching for an instant into each other's specificities. In terms of the amphibian and Elisa, he exerts as the deterritorialization agent

⁵ The next chapter will properly discuss the different implications of the contrasting milieus.

⁶ This is not the first time del Toro uses the mise-en-scene and the cinematography to contrast the human world with other organisms' one. For example, Podalski shows how in *Mimic* (1997) the filmmaker "draws a clear demarcation between the 'human world' above ground (civilized, ordered) and the 'insect world'". (2014: 106)

⁷ "Now each time there is a translation of parts in space, there is also a qualitative change in a whole" (Deleuze 1986:3). And, "the duration or the whole, [is] a spiritual reality which constantly changes according to its own relations" (Deleuze 1986:11).

⁸ "The orchid deterritorializes by forming an image, a tracing of a wasp; but the wasp reterritorializes on that image. The wasp is nevertheless deterritorialized, becoming a piece in the orchid's reproductive apparatus. But it reterritorializes the orchid by transporting its pollen." (Deleuze and Guattari 2005:10).

who triggers her process of becoming. Even though they are acknowledging and experiencing each other's fundamental aspects; since the narrative focus is on Elisa, the film finishes by depicting and detailing her metamorphosis.

However, Deleuze and Guattari also clarify “the human being does not ‘really’ become an animal any more than the animal ‘really’ becomes something else. [For] Becoming produces nothing other than itself” (Deleuze and Guattari 2005:238). Thus, within the story, becoming-animal is an essential shift toward the Otherness, implicating a different world's perception with Elisa's body and milieu's alteration. For she passes from her daily regular activities towards a sociopolitical order-disruptive action to free the amphibian. From calmly listening to her friends' trivial complains to a decisive questioning about humanity, which leads to the moment the ancient neck-marks open as gills, making possible a renewed existence underneath the water (*The Shape of Water* 2017).

In this respect, certain scenes speak of Elisa's complete transformation. Her inner-self variations reflect in gestures and actions that only appear after she has met the amphibian and starts planning his rescue. For instance, she is more assertive with her hand-signs during the conversations with Gilles or Strickland and shows a willpower determination in the eyes that echo her whole temperament's development. Del Toro's idea of the image as a verb and adjective works once again to the purpose of showing what has changed inside the heroine. As Hurtrez affirms, the medium close-up serves to emphasize facial expressions and convey physiological meaning (2013:7). Hence, as the Mexican filmmaker captures on medium close-ups Elisa's peculiar new behavior and its manifestations, the images gain the status of adjectives-in-motion, expressing her being's changes while she goes through them.

At the end, Elisa's personality modifications, as part of her becoming, correlate with the scars' mutation final sequence. Here, the images have as well the huge potential to depict the exact instant of the physical transformation. They reveal both the action, i.e. to become, and the adjective, i.e. how does it look like to become? Even when the motion picture could have shown this metamorphosis with an extreme close-up, it remains on a medium close shot to encompass the changing body part with the character's face as the sign of a nature that has already shifted. Therefore, del Toro's concluding frames, as the previous Elisa's medium

close-ups are powerful qualifying actions to experience the becoming as a subjectivity's total deterritorialization.

The anomalous alliance brings together the heterogeneities

Throughout the film, the viewer experiences the re-defining identity traits of Elisa and the amphibian as they change alongside the multiple nuances of their unusual relationship. However, one issue remains unsolved. Why and how those dissimilar subjectivities get involved? What exactly brings them together and starts the forth-going transformation? In this matter, *The Shape of Water* consents a further relation with other philosophical notions about becoming.

Although a becoming-animal takes place involving heterogeneous organisms, their random encounter does not assure the process' beginning. The deterritorialized and deterritorializing subjectivities are atypical beings. They are the "...an-omalie, a Greek noun that has lost its adjective, [and] designates the unequal, the coarse, the rough, the cutting edge of deterritorialization" (Deleuze and Guattari 2005: 243). The anomalous is an exceptional individual occupying a particular position inside a generality. He "sometimes appears as the head of the band, sometimes as the Loner on the sidelines of the pack, and sometimes as the higher Power" (2005: 244); and because of this unique location, he functions as an invitation into the multiplicity to whom it belongs. Thus, the deterritorialization implies that its subjects bond through an alliance (2005:246), thanks to their specific situation within Nature and society.

In the film's case, the main characters move towards their essential shift because of the anomalous position they inhabit, because their existence unrolls in peculiar liminal places. Elisa is a solitary figure living above an old movie theater; communicating with sign language since she has no voice to use words. With a special attraction for water regarding her vital activities, the story clarifies that she is no ordinary woman. She is the loner on society's borderlines, passing unnoticed for the rest of the world if not for her two friends: the neighbor Gilles hiding his homosexuality and Zelda, the African American working with her as cleaners

on a top-secret government facility (*The Shape of Water* 2017). With Elisa, they all belong to segregated minorities in the 1960s North American culture.

The amphibian escapes as well to conventional classifications. Though it is significant that, like Elisa, he expresses thoughts and feelings through signs and gestures. Besides his obvious corporal peculiarities addressing his half-man half-fish condition, which for example give him the ability to adapt his thorax for breathing in two environments. As an asset in a laboratory, he lives in-between his natural habitat and the humans' collectivity without belonging to either of them (*The Shape of Water* 2017). While as an elemental river deity, he is a form of a higher power whose magic comes from the extraordinary attachment with water⁹.

The outsiders are a recurrent theme in del Toro's filmography. As Podasky (2014) shows with his earlier films, they have a reworking of the Other and a problematization of racial hierarchies encouraging the spectator to assume the perspective of the marginalized communities. Here, Elisa, Gilles, and Zelda represent the people relegated to the midpoints of the traditional and prevailing social order while offering a different world's experience. Likewise, the role of the creature as a leading man challenges the viewers to look outside moral, anthropological and beauty standards. As the proper filmmaker reveals, the monster's usual presence within his movies is an embodiment of the Otherness and a symbol for the beauty of imperfection (del Toro 2017). In this way, through their position and situation, the film's characters escape and question the human being's demarcation and nowadays society's national boundaries.

Therefore, Elisa and the amphibian are anomalous roles on the limit of sociocultural hegemonic values and forms of categorization. As del Toro (2017) explains, the story happens in a time of toxic masculinity, gender and race discrimination, and political fear from the other because of the Cold War. However, the characteristics that differentiate them the most from dominant definitions turn up to be the point of contact between them. Despite their dissimilarities, they share aspects in common such as the lack of voice to communicate and their bond with the water. Meaning, that the unusual qualities driving them towards the edge

⁹ Deleuze and Guattari argue that the magical and powerful figure of the sorcerer has always given him the anomalous position at the edge of fields, woods or villages (2005: 246)

of their essential correspondence with a multiplicity, are the ones making the encounter possible¹⁰. Those anomalies expose how both heterogeneities are in place to establish the deterritorializing alliance.

Deleuze and Guattari explain to what extent the anomalous, as borderline of the band, only has intensive affections. It is an irresistible attraction providing the choice for each one to enter his or her becoming-animal (2005:244). From the time Elisa sees the creature's extremity in the tank, she goes out of the laboratory and a medium close-up captures her looking both intrigued and worried. Later on, when they meet, the camera's traveling approaching from the bottom into their faces emphasizes an instant of affection between them that will grow into a romantic relationship (*The Shape of Water* 2017). For the heroine starts her becoming-animal because of the affective link with the amphibian. Such an emotional connection comes up because of their shared traits encountering in and through the anomalous position.

The intrinsic magnificence of this fable lies on the fact that love is the alliance force bringing together those heterogeneous subjects¹¹ and giving them the impulse to start the journey that sweeps them from their fixated ontologies. Likewise, as they undergo their particular becomings, they carry the renewal of their entire inhabited world and the surrounding people. I.e., as Elisa detaches from her own humanity, starting from the moment she engages on a compromised action to free the amphibian; her two friends, also in anomalous positions, shift and go through life changes thanks to her.

This transformation flux, incorporating different figures and changing their day-to-day reality, has an allegorical sequence. Right after Elisa and the amphibian have been together in her flooded bathroom, the movie shows her staring at the bus' wet window on the road to work. Then, the image focuses on a couple of tiny drops of water moving. As they clash and simultaneously slide through the glass, they cause a change in the remnant drops' shape and

¹⁰ Joëlle Ducos (2004) addresses the multiple significances of the frontier. On this matter, she explains how, as a liminal place, it can set up a differentiating limit and also work as transitional borderline. From a sociopolitical and ontological perspective, this is the space for identity's manifestation in direct opposition with the other side. Which allows a double perception: that of the self and that of the Otherness' social and political identity.

¹¹ "I needed to talk about acceptance and love in a very urgent way. I feel it as an immigrant that has been received by this country, but I still feel there is sort of the demonization of 'the other' very present" (del Toro 2017).

configuration (*The Shape of Water* 2017). It synthesizes on a simple poetic form the intricacy of the process of becoming linking everyone and everything on constant motion. Thus, through many of its shots and sequences, the film gathers the becoming-animal elements and exposes the way they entangle alongside with the story's characters. In this manner, it allows an understanding experience of the possibility and complexity of a deterritorializing process involving, through an affective alliance, heterogeneous subjects, environments and world's perceptions.

1.2 *Ponyo* and the becoming-girl

Hayao Miyazaki's *Ponyo on the Cliff by the Sea* (2008), is the animated story of a little red goldfish living under her father Fujimoto's uptight protection on the bottom of the ocean. One day, the restless fishlike being with a child's face escapes her father's laboratory and ends up stuck on a crystal jar by the shore. There she will meet the five-year-old Sosuke, who rescues her from the trap while cutting himself. This event causes the goldfish to taste the kid's blood, which sets her off on a journey to become human. Knowing none of this, Sosuke names her as Ponyo and promises to protect her always, thus beginning a friendship based on how much they enjoy each other's presence.

When Fujimoto finds his daughter and takes her underwater, she is already longing to become human. Even though he tries with all his power to restrain her transformation, Ponyo's magic and willpower allow her to break free from her watery lair and to go back to Sosuke's home in the cliff by the sea, transformed in a girl. The result of the goldfish's accomplished metamorphosis is a terrible imbalance of Nature that provokes a tsunami and the uncontrolled proliferation of sea's life. As a result, Fujimoto and the mother-ocean Grannamare put the two kids on a love test as the only chance to restore balance without taking away their daughter's new humanlike form. It all works out for the best when Sosuke replies to Grannamare that he loves Ponyo in any of her forms and she chooses to stay human, giving up her magical powers.

Although the production notes credit Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid* as an inspiration, Miyazaki himself has explained that his motivation for making this film was more abstract than the immediate similarities with that tale¹². In addition, Studio Ghibli is "known for presenting strong, independent female characters, and exploring the relationship between humanity and nature, (...) unafraid to explore important philosophical issues" (BFI 2014). Within this logic, it is possible to delve into *Ponyo*'s resonances with the becoming that involves heterogeneities on anomalous positions. This time, the shift goes from the fish toward the female-child involving a contagion, other of Deleuze and Guattari's becoming-animal principles.

Second example of heterogeneities and their anomalous position

Even for a non-familiarized spectator, just by reading the previous synopsis, *Ponyo* (2008) reveals as a story about a peculiar process of becoming. Only that in this case, the narrative is focusing on how the human presence deterritorializes the fishlike creature. The film is displaying once again as its leading roles two dissimilar and thought-provoking subjectivities. On the one hand, the goldfish living on an ocean kingdom beautifully depicted as a harmonious enchanted place; on the other, the five-year-old boy who lives in the cliff's house. Alongside them, the sea and the children's parents are relevant figures complementing the contrast of encountering heterogeneities.

Ponyo is the initial character entering after the introductory sequence that portrays the wonderful and mysterious subaquatic life. The movie illustrates her in the beginning as a tiny red goldfish, "without a definitive form but with a human face" (Joubert-Laurencin 2011:23), leaving her father's submarine to adventure towards the human's world (*Ponyo* 2008). In this way, from the early shots, the animated feature establishes Ponyo's most defining identity traits¹³, which in time will lead to her deterritorialization. First, her atypical physical appearance, an aquatic animal standing out because of her humanlike expressing eyes, is

¹² "I feel like I'm searching in my subconscious with a fishing net, and I happened upon catching a goldfish in that net. That was the inspiration for starting to make this movie." (Miyazaki 2012)

¹³ In fact, Odell and Le Blanc (2010) suggest that the audience accepts this strange character as real as the rest of the ocean's living beings because she is animated in as realistic a way as the earlier jellyfish.

already suggesting her hybrid magical nature¹⁴. Second, her rebel action speaks of both her inclination and posterior fascination for humankind. For instance, Odell and Le Blanc (2010) describe her as

...one of Miyazaki's most memorable characters in that she is both fantastical and real. She reacts to everything in an inquisitive manner, without fear, just as children growing up examine the world around them, oblivious of danger. She's also cheeky – spitting out jets of water with alarming accuracy to indicate anything from amusement to displeasure. Like a child, she slowly learns the protocols of language and her relationship with Sosuke changes from that of rescued pet to beloved companion.

As Ponyo's escape takes her to explore and to witness the outside world, the other protagonist appears. While she gazes from the water's surface, the image shows Sosuke descending the cliff to play with his boat (*Ponyo* 2008). Through actions and dialogues, the story presents him as the innocent and trustful kid, capable of unconditional love and with an empathetic character for everyone and everything surrounding him. He would be the one exerting as a deterritorializing agent for Ponyo's becoming-child. Though it is important to remark, Sosuke is not a fixed term in the process since he is experiencing life's changes too. As Cavallaro explains, *Ponyo* addresses his "emotional and intellectual development as he negotiates the various complications attendant on his relationships not only with the heroine¹⁵ and the marine domain she comes from but also his caring mother and often absent father" (2010:129).

Ponyo and Sosuke, the fish and the child, those are the heterogeneities approaching in Miyazaki's movie. Once she meets him and has direct contact with a different life form, her two fundamental qualities conjugate to set in motion her transformation. According to Cavallaro, "the anime explores the titular heroine's own right of passage as, driven by a desperate yearning to become a human girl, she deploys powerful magic" (2010:118). After Fujimoto takes her back to his laboratory, Ponyo confirms her magical ability to change as she

¹⁴ The Hayao Miyazaki's *Ponyo* Review (Twitch) proposes that beyond Ponyo's fish form "the magic is often hidden away in little details, how she jumps up, runs into things or looks at the wonders of instant noodles".

¹⁵ Which the same author synthesizes by saying that the story shows the psychological development of a human boy as he discovers, names, befriends, loses and magically regains the object of his desire (2010:118).

gives herself an anthropic form, by growing limbs that are going to turn into legs and hands (*Ponyo* 2008). Through this reaffirmation of willpower, she manifests the desire to be as a woman with the boy who saved her. From this point on, every time the film centers on Ponyo, it will display her emotional and psychological development, as she physically transforms into a little girl. Here, becoming-child and becoming-woman entangle within the same deterritorialization's process.

The crucial event, referring to Ponyo's inner self's modification in resonance with the corporal shift, comes during an argument with her father, when she refuses her birth name – Brünnhilde–, and accepts Ponyo as her own (*Ponyo* 2008). This meaningful action confesses her fondness for Sosuke (Miyazaki, 2008:198) since he first called her that way. The rejection of her former name and the self-affirmation of a new one reflect on what Odell and Le Blanc recognize as a “common theme among Miyazaki heroines, that of identity and loss” (2010). As they also acknowledge, “the heroine's identity is inexorably linked to her name and who she wants to be. Having decided on love and humanity, Ponyo resolutely sticks with her adopted, human, name” (2010).

In this context, as the main characters in *The Shape of Water*, the heterogeneous subjects' anomalous position also has a paramount impact on the becoming process encompassing them. Ponyo lives in “a world where magic and alchemy are accepted as part of the ordinary (...) animated not as a backdrop to the story but as one of its principal characters” (Miyazaki, 2008:419). As a character, the sea already exemplifies the liminal space where dissimilar elements encounter. The ambivalent and ever-changing place where antithetical terms such as the fantastic and the conventional, merge and become.

Within it, subjects on anomalous positions like Ponyo are pushing the whole towards its constant movement. She is extending her milieu's boundaries with her will to shift. Something that the film's animation wonderfully stages throughout the sequence where she unleashes the power of the ocean and runs on top of giant waves to Sosuke's house on the cliff. As Wu analyses, the “harnessing of enormous tidal waves dramatizes, embodies and highlights Ponyo's passionate determination to break loose from Fujimoto's parental prison” (2016:198). Hence, since Ponyo dwells on the edge of her marvelous marine world, she is leading and causing the encounter between the extraordinary and the human's quotidian life.

Likewise, the deterritorializing agent Sosuke occupies an atypical spot inside society. First, because he is a little boy which gives him a different gaze and comprehension of the human being's daily experiences. Second, because of his abode's specific location on the uttermost part of town and on the sea's immediacies. Sosuke's home is in between contrasting realities that give it a dual significance. Wu points out the dwelling connection with human existence comes from "the quiet and stable domestic experience of shelter" (2016:199), which proves a safeness feeling while facing the unknown vast ocean. Still, as Sosuke's mother, Lisa, explains to his son "this house is a lighthouse in a storm" (*Ponyo* 2008). Meaning it is as much a differentiating limit from the water –i.e. the shelter–, as a beacon calling everyone and everything from the sea¹⁶. Thus, the place Sosuke inhabits corresponds with the peculiarities of his anomalous position, those allowing the passage and interchange between civilization and the subaquatic realm.

To sum up, the film stages the protagonists' anomalous situation associated with the features of the complex and fluctuating borderline-spaces they inhabit¹⁷. Yet, by doing so, it creates the meeting point between two worlds that can only relate through the approaching of the heterogeneities residing on its frontiers. Because those distinctive subjects share the inclination and fascination for what lies beyond their own milieu. This is the reason when Ponyo arrives at the shore, the first human she sees is the five-year-old boy living by the cliff, on what Deleuze and Guattari call the cutting edge of deterritorialization (2005:244).

Until this point, the analysis shows how Miyazaki's feature combines narrative¹⁸ and animated audiovisual elements to portray a set of interesting contrasts, developing in and from the transformation process. In particular, they all lead back to the relationship growth between Ponyo and Sosuke. As Cavallaro maintains, *Ponyo*'s story is a dramatized bildungsroman that concentrates concurrently on [their] two interrelated journeys (2010:129). The film's dichotomies are expressing, in different manners, the reach, and extension of the encounter between heterogeneities. Thus, similar to the analyzed becoming-animal factors present within

¹⁶ "Lisa and Sosuke's house is portrayed as a lighthouse standing on the highest point of the town. The house is a symbol in that it shields the protagonists from the storm, lights the direction (...), and invokes a strong sense of home in the audience's imagination." (Wu 2016:199).

¹⁷ "Sosuke dwells on the land and belongs to the masculine principle, and Ponyo the sea and the feminine principle" (Wu 2016:198).

¹⁸ In *Ponyo*, there are narrative dialectics retaining interrelated domains with their own semiotic properties, such as mundanity/transcendence; land/sea; human/mermaid; male/female (Wu 2016:200).

The Shape of Water (2017), in this case, the resulting deterritorialization encompass dissimilar subjectivities because of the way their anomalous positions allow their identities and realities to connect.

The contagion and other form of becoming

Even though it shares basic similarities with the becoming-animal embedded within *The Shape of Water*, Miyazaki's film is addressing another facet of becoming itself. Instead of the human becoming animal, now the animal is becoming a girl, a unique becoming-child and becoming-woman combination. Alongside this main difference, the contagion appears as a complementary alternative to bring together the heterogeneous subjectivities.

Ponyo and Sosuke meet for the first time after she has extended to the furthest her anomalous position within the underwater realm approaching the cliff. Rather than the affective alliance happening at first sight, analogous to the one of Elisa and the amphibian, Ponyo's becoming process will start because of the direct contact with the little boy's blood. When he saves the goldfish from the trap by breaking the crystal and cutting himself, this causes her reaction to lick and heal him with her magical powers (*Ponyo* 2008).

This is the meaningful gesture establishing the relationship between the two subjects from different realities. There is a contagion involving "terms that are entirely heterogeneous: for example, a human being, an animal, and a bacterium (...). These combinations are neither genetic nor structural; they are interkingdoms, unnatural participations. That is the only way Nature operates—against itself." (Deleuze and Guattari 2005:242) Hence, the contagion is a connection that keeps going Nature's constant shift.

In Ponyo's case, her father Fujimoto confirms that her interaction with Sosuke's blood sets her human transformation in motion (*Ponyo* 2008). Still, their bond goes beyond a mere metamorphosis. As Ross explains, "their love begins, defined not as eros but as mutual nurturing and protection" (2014:23). Thus, the affection appears again as a key element in the becoming even if this time comes after the physical contact. Sosuke exerts Ponyo's deterritorialization first through contagion and then with the emotional attachment. The film's

images reinforce the crucial alteration moment in the story's narrative. In this matter, Cavallaro analysis shows how upon licking the blood,

Ponyo rapidly develops an appetite for all things human and this gives Miyazaki plenty of opportunities to dwell on some exquisite vignettes—as delightfully evinced by the scene in which Ponyo samples honeyed tea: few facial expressions in live-action cinema equal the wordless charm of the creature's mien in this particular moment (2010:131).

However, if the contagion with Sosuke allows Ponyo to become a girl, it also implies the get-together of their different general realities. “Animals are packs, and packs form, develop, and are transformed by contagion”; proving “the Universe does not function by filiation or heredity” (Deleuze and Guattari 2005:242). Even in their anomalous position, subjects belong to multiplicities with their own developing dynamics, encountering thanks to the contagion. *Ponyo* exemplifies to what extent the uncanny and unexpected contact between dissimilar terms within Nature's realms permits its interactive communication to proliferate¹⁹. Miyazaki's film displays the correlation between a subject, her pack, and their mutual development.

First, it shows Ponyo belonging to a group of similar goldfishes²⁰ following her sister after she goes out of Fujimoto's lab (*Ponyo* 2008). Then, after her contagion has happened, “the sisters bite through the protective spell on Ponyo and her strength is unleashed” (Wu 2016:198). The synergy that this scene captures, speaks of the multiplicity's relevant complementary role to extend the subject's influence towards the whole. Afterward, the movie depicts the shoal's transformation into giant fishlike waves where the heroine stands and surges from the bottom of the sea as a girl. Finally, as she arrives at Sosuke's house, the shoal turned into a prehistoric tsunami, reaches the human sphere full filling the encounter between two worlds.

¹⁹ “Bands, human or animal, proliferate by contagion.” (Deleuze and Guattari 2005:241)

²⁰ Regarding the importance of the multiplicity's depiction within the film, Odell and Le Blanc (2010) remark that “it is the sheer number of independently animated bodies – here an almost unprecedented number – which enhance the believability of the scene (...) the hand-animated schools of fish give each creature true individuality”

Here lies the reason Deleuze and Guattari warn, "... exclusive importance should not be attached to becomings-animal. Rather, they are segments occupying a median region" (2005:248). Because becoming-animal is only a fragment, among many others²¹, of a fluctuating process that runs both through the bands or packs that come together, and through the subjectivities that propitiate and endure such a deterritorializing concurrence. Becoming is a complex oscillation involving individuals and multiplicities²² and leading them throughout countless fluctuations. The configured space where this movement keeps occurring makes up the plane of immanence (Deleuze and Guattari 2005).

Thus, the becoming itself is an incessant changing flux that, as Ponyo's transformation demonstrates, can sometimes take the form of becoming-girl and becoming-child. Nonetheless, just as becoming-animal is not about imitating or resembling the animal, neither becoming-girl comprises converting into a girl.

The girl and the child do not become; it is becoming itself that is a child or a girl.

The child does not become an adult any more than the girl becomes a woman; the girl is the becoming-woman of each sex, just as the child is the becoming-young of every age. (Deleuze and Guattari 2005:277).

For becoming takes subjects and/or multiplicities to experience within their essential configurations other aspects, perceptions, and rhythms about the world. "Extracting from one's age [and sex] the particles, the speeds and slownesses, the flows that constitute the youth [and the girl]" (Deleuze and Guattari 2005:277). Becoming-child and becoming-girl is a matter of living and understanding reality with a particular young and loving perspective.

The film illustrates this point, regarding Ponyo's becoming, during the scene where she is in the boat with Sosuke and they meet a married couple with a kid. Because Ponyo is now fascinated experiencing an unusual world's perception; from the moment she sees the baby, all she wants to do is to take care of him by sharing her food or giving him a farewell-healing kiss

²¹ Deleuze and Guattari also explain that "Becoming can and should be qualified as becoming-animal even in the absence of a term that would be the animal become..." (2005:238) and that "becoming-animal is only one becoming among others." (2005:272)

²² Dawson brilliantly explains such a relationship in terms of particles and bodies: "as each particle in motion belongs to a body in a particular relation, the assemblages it forms are continually reconstituting themselves and, therefore, the relation of parts composing a body remains in a state of continual (re)composition." (2008:89).

(*Ponyo* 2008). As Wu (2016:199) argues, this insisting attitude to nurse the infant demonstrates the heroine developed femininity.

In consequence, the goldfish's transformation reveals as more than just a corporal modification. It is not only about the goldfish growing limbs that turn into hands and feet, and shaping its body like the one of a little girl. For the main character's authentic deterritorialization is a shift towards a feminine caring comprehension about life and its constitutive parts. "A becoming-woman as atoms of womanhood capable of crossing and impregnating an entire social field, and of contaminating men, of sweeping them up in that becoming" (Deleuze and Guattari, 2005:276). Henceforth, *Ponyo's* becoming-girl is the development of a unique empathetic bond with the potentiality to propagate into everyone else surrounding her. Deleuze and Guattari consider this affective capability to relate with others stating "all becomings begin with and have to pass through becoming-woman" (2005:277).

Thus, even though there are common elements with *The Shape of Water* such as the heterogeneous subjectivities and their anomalous positions, Miyazaki's film presents another form of becoming while highlighting other components within the process. I.e. the way the heterogeneities start the deterritorialization by contagion and the resulting transformation. *Ponyo* flows through a different segment of the becoming itself with its own movements and affections, a becoming-girl. "Not imitating or assuming the female form, but emitting particles that enter (...) a microfemininity, in other words, that produce in us a molecular woman" (Deleuze and Guattari, 2005:275).

1.3 *A Scene at the Sea* and becoming-imperceptible

The third film from the Japanese actor and filmmaker Takeshi Kitano, *A Scene at the Sea* (1991), is the story about Shigeru, a deaf sanitation worker, who teaches himself how to surf after finding a damaged surfboard in the garbage. During his first attempts, his mute girlfriend Takako comes to see him practice from the beach, where other surfers also notice and laugh at the new apprentice in the sea.

After a few days, Shigeru breaks the repaired surfboard and the love couple starts looking for another. They arrive at a former surfer's shop whose owner sympathizes with Shigeru, helping him with additional equipment, encouraging him to work out, and making him register for a contest. As time goes by, the protagonist comes to be a decent surfer, always under the tender, loving observation of Takako. They share an unforgettable summer. Then, one cloudy and rainy fall morning, she arrives late for her boyfriend's surf practice routine. When she gets to the shore, all she can corroborate in an overwhelming silence is that he has disappeared in the sea²³, leaving behind his surfboard.

Beneath such a simple narrative in terms of its almost inexistent dialogues, its few dramatic elements and plot twists lies a story pointing towards more compound themes of scholar analysis. 1) The sea's significance as a liminal passage place between the self and the Other (Gerow, 1999). 2) The feminine point of view of the Japanese society and of typical masculine surf culture (Karatsu, 2013). 3) The dissolving atomic encounter between eastern and western civilizations and other dualities (Redmond, 2013). However, within Takeshi's film, and even among these ideas and interpretations, flows and comes up the third form of the becoming itself, a becoming-imperceptible.

The heterogeneities' affective alliance leads back to the imperceptible

In opposition to the previous examples, *A Scene at the Sea*'s leading roles are not quite the contrasting subjectivities causing each other's deterritorialization. Shigeru and Takako's bond nurses on what they have in common, a mutual understanding through silence, gestures, and looks. In this context, Redmond (2013:92) remarks that their "relationship manifests itself through the act of them being divided but connected by the sand (she stays on the beach watching) and the sea (where he surfs and eventually dies)". Then, the heterogeneities at play are Shigeru and the sea. The human being and Nature, in particular, the pond's nature, are the dissimilar terms involved in the becoming that the motion picture displays.

²³ It is important to remark that "In the French theatrical version of "A Scene at the Sea", a subtitle says "Il est devenu Poisson" (he became fish). The subtitle was written by French translator and Japanese film authority Catherine Cadou on the request of Kitano Takeshi. According to Cadou, Kitano was afraid that a western audience wouldn't understand the death/disappearance of Shigeru and feared that they would interpret it as kamikakushi (spirited away)" (SyLOW, 2004).

The deterritorialized subject is a young man depicted as a deaf low-middle-class worker living in a simple apartment. Besides the assumption he is a character on the margins of cultural and social order, which already points to an anomalous position similar to Elisa, there is not much more the film allows knowing about him. Some scholars maintain that this is because Shigeru has few point-of-view-shots, which resists emotional identification (Abe 2005:92; Gerow 2007:93). Before his encounter with the ocean, it is not possible to grasp any other information about who he is or any other personality trait.

In contrast, because the sea is deterritorializing him into the imperceptibility (is this what death means for everybody?), the movie dwells on the survivor's perception. As Karatsu analyses, "the film can be read as Takako's work of mourning, the architecture of her memory following Shigeru's death. (...) Takako's point-of-view-shots prevail (...). For the majority of the film, we follow Takako and see things through her eyes." (2013: 632-633). Hence, the story develops as she remembers the past summer with Shigeru and what they lived together until his disappearance. An idea reinforced by the final showing the protagonist's life recollection through the photographs on the surfboard (*A Scene at the Sea* 1991). Suggesting that as the existence follows its constant becoming; all it remains is an immobile picture starting someone else's reminiscences.

Whereas the movie reveals such a peculiar rapport between the main human characters, the sea appears as a discrepant role. From the establishing panoramic shot displaying the silent seascape in the Shônan shore cross-cutting to a close-up of the leading character's face (*A Scene at the Sea* 1991), the film implies the unusual relationship that will take place between those opposing subjects. The water with its permanent swaying is calling and exerting an irresistible attraction on Shigeru as he stands still watching it. Unlike Ponyo and Sosuke's shift process going from contagion to the affection, here it goes in the other direction. The desire occurs early in the story and generates Shigeru's impulse to learn how to surf, entering in contact with the sea's movement.

The sea works as the deterritorializing agent because of this shifting and differentiated presence. Kitano himself explains that he likes the sea because of its perpetual motion (2008:104). This defining character also allows the water body to function as the scenario where the becoming process takes place. As Redmond accurately points out, "Kitano employs

the sea and the shoreline, and the qualities of water, to explore questions of loss and belonging, and new becomings” (2013:86)²⁴. Therefore, throughout Kitano’s feature, the sea works as an anomalous protagonist. Its fluctuation attracts and mobilizes the human being’s existence by encountering its anomalous subject. This is the reason it all unravels after Shigeru experiences that powerful attraction.

After that, the ocean becomes the location for contrasting complex realities to merge and transform. As Shigeru enters the water’s immense flowing motion, he establishes the link between humanity and Nature; and then vanishes, losing himself in another form of the becoming itself. In fact, “the self is only a threshold, a door, a becoming between two multiplicities” (Deleuze and Guattari 2005:249). Inevitably, in this process where opposing multiplicities clash and change as part of the shifting rhythm of life, the subjectivities that allow such encounter through their anomalous position, end up disappearing. In this context, Redmond (2013:1) conceive Kitano “as an auteur of loss whose discourse of atomization speaks across the waves”.

Thus, Shigeru’s process of becoming after the affective alliance with the sea takes him towards a becoming-imperceptible. Likewise, every other becoming, such as becoming-woman or becoming-animal, rushes towards this form. “The imperceptible is the immanent end of becoming, its cosmic formula. (...) to become an unfindable particle in infinite meditation on the infinite” (Deleuze and Guattari 2005:279). Becoming-imperceptible is the dismantling of illusive restricting definitions and discernable singularities. The face, the individuality, the Self, the body, the one, they all turn into unnoticeable distinctions within the vast cosmos. It is about reaching

...the ultimate regions of a Continuum inhabited by unnamable waves and unfindable particles (...) to become progressively more molecular in a kind of cosmic lapping through which the inaudible makes itself heard and the imperceptible appears as such. [Changing] the perceptive coordinates of space-time and introduced us to a universe of micro-perceptions. (Deleuze and Guattari 2005:248)

²⁴ On a similar perspective, Gerow (1999) analyses how Takeshi’s depiction of the shore and the sea reemphasizes those locations’ association with death and play.

Here is the reason the other becomings stretch towards becoming-imperceptible. This form of the becoming itself drives the human being, or any other creature, from his recognizable world's configuration into the multiple facets of Life. The quintessential de-territorialization's significance is, therefore, a shift of the quotidian, privileged, central location where the subject stands to sense, order and categorize reality. He enters and loses himself as a small particle in a new immense and unknown multiplicity, where his regular perceptions and conceptualizations no longer apply. Such is the variation every subjectivity goes through when facing an anomalous presence that brings the affective and/or contagious experience of any other segment of the Universe.

The becoming-imperceptible in *A Scene at the Sea* starts with Shigeru standing in the land watching the seascape, which takes him to spend most of his daytime inside the water practicing. There, he develops an attachment that distances him apart from himself, his girlfriend, the rest of his dull habits as they were until the sea called him, and at the end, from his own humanity. While he surfs, he is drifting away into a more compound and unnoticeable motion. Hence, by following the sea's attraction and having a direct contagion of its perpetual sway, Shigeru crosses into a space of constant becoming, the Deleuzian plain of immanence (2005). Since he merges in the process of unstoppable transformations, where subjects are always shifting, he is not Shigeru anymore. His death is the vanishing of his human configuration within Nature's fluctuating reality. As Redmond states, Kitano's films offer the experience of "the loss of the body [and] of self-image on a plane of immanence" (2013:9).

Like this, the film conveys one of the many becoming-imperceptible's significances as a rupture with everybody and everything else. "...to go unnoticed (...) to retain and extract only the essential lines and movements of nature (...) to find one's proximities and zones of indiscernibility" (Deleuze and Guattari 2005: 279-280). It is a motion with the potentiality to decenter the Self and to lead towards the fundamental understanding of the cosmos' multiplicity and variations from previously indiscernible perspectives. Such is the reality a deterritorialized subject accesses and experiences at the outcome of every transformation. In this sense, not only Shigeru but also Elisa, Ponyo and the other characters they involve in their becomings, arrive at a certain degree of becoming-imperceptible.

In this order of ideas, it is possible to asseverate a Deleuzian deterritorialization is going on in each of the three film's contents. Each of the analyzed examples relates to distinctive moments of the becoming itself. Although they only display particular metamorphoses throughout the narrative, they share common elements with the general process of becoming. From the heterogeneous subjectivities, the protagonists' anomalous position, a deterritorializing encounter through an affective alliance and/or the contagion, to the corporal, subjective and perceptive shift alongside the social, cultural and natural world. Whether it is the becoming-animal, the becoming-child or the becoming-imperceptible, what remains manifest is the complex fluctuation between subjects and multiplicities embedded within the films. The stories' development, involving characters, dialogues, and actions through the moving image, reveal Nature's creative involution sweeping away different beings from their fixed ontologies towards new essential perceptions and configurations.

CHAPTER 2. A change of milieu and the deterritorialized perception

2.1 The movement-image deterritorializing potentiality.

The previous chapter focused on analyzing how different forms of becoming itself run through the films' narrative content. The examination of characters, themes, dialogues, and plot development showed the plausible concurrences and correlations with key notions of such a process of deterritorialization. Whether by a) the heterogeneous relationships depicted among the leading roles through alliance or contagion; b) the anomalous position inside a multiplicity; or c) the resulting process' and its multiple significances. It proved the stories within these movies correspond with the diversity of Nature's complex motion.

Although already certain parts of the analysis extended to how the frame, the mise-en-scene, or the camerawork might reinforce each becoming process embedded within the sample stories²⁵; it remains as a pending matter the full consideration of the cinematographic image's relevance. Therefore, the present chapter's focal point will be to consider cinema's technical and formal aspects potentiality to provide a contagious experience of becoming. How the editing and the use of shots, camera movements and angles contribute to display the new perspective for the character's transformation and to deterritorialize the spectator's perception into a different milieu.

An initial case: *Crimson Gold* and the social world's change of perspective

Jafar Panahi's *Crimson Gold* (2003) opening sequence constitutes a first powerful example to illustrate the moving image's deterritorializing perceptive potential. If the Iranian filmmaker's images of a pizza delivery-guy struggling through life depicts Teheran's

²⁵ Bearing in mind del Toro's notion, in *The Shape of Water* (2017) the image as both verb and adjective serves to depict corporal qualities, to convey psychological meaning, and it reinforces the determined moment of a whole subjectivity's transformation. While in *Ponyo* (2008) the detailed animation of landscapes and places with their corresponding creatures and objects works as a contrast between the anomalous and his realm. Thus, setting the tone for the encounter of multiplicities. As for *A Scene at the Sea* (1991), the cross-cutting shots of the sea and the main character speak of the irresistible alliance moment.

modernity on a motorcycle (Sajoo 2008), is because of the introductory scenes setting up a movement that exerts as a point of contagion to unveil the society from a distinct perspective.

The film starts with a bird's singing against the black screen transitioning to the eye-level fixed shot²⁶ of a pawnshop's interior. Here, the camera functions as an awakening point-of-view opening up to a constricted space with the street in the back, just to witness the exact moment of a robbery going wrong for everybody involved. The shop's owner activates the alarm, a grid closes the exit, the thief kills him, and after destroying with impotence the whole place he shoots himself (*Crimson Gold* 2003). Such a visual experience points to the metaphoric sense of the cinematographic image removing the viewer's blindfold and disclosing reality's authentic problems and contradictions.

However, a different perception of life does not appear immediately as a seen revelation from an established, unilateral point of view. For the initial framing only offers the restricted and privileged side of the social world. The distant and unreachable open door between two plants and a couple of statues represents the archetypical high-class fancy interior (*Crimson Gold* 2003). This narrow immobile gaze is the second experience of reality that the film displays. If it stayed always in that position the spectator would have to assemble the action, as much as its causes and consequences, through the pieces that come and go in front of the still frame, half seeing what is happening in the store and half speculating about the outside world's reaction. Henceforth, to access the exterior and understand what lies beyond the threshold, the image must move and displace the perspective.

The camera's gradual zoom-in of the entrance is the third film experience after the black screen's transition to the limited interior. This slow movement begins once the manslaughter has occurred when the shoplifter removes the motorcycle helmet (*Crimson Gold* 2003). Meaning, the image is taking the observer out of the bourgeoisie interior's static viewpoint and of the character's mind. For it avoids the introspective look of his psychology, and rather than searching for the subjective reasons of his crime, it approaches the objective world. Consequently, the inside is also a metaphor for rooted class preconceptions and moral judgments.

²⁶ Fischer (2004) notes that the image is supposed to come from a security camera's footage.

In contrast, outside will be the opposite of those terms. By zooming in, the movie is leading the viewer from a particular fixed point-of-view into a more dynamic, diverse and general perception of society's problematic reality. After the zoom, the camera shifts and follows the main character on its motorcycle around various city spheres with its hidden stories. The movement breaks the stillness of a comfortable predominant position and offers the Otherness' standpoint. It is the contagious experience of other social and political outlook.

As Fischer shows in his Iranian films' analysis, some of them allow "the camera to become an agent of deterritorialization. The camera makes alternative visions of reality visible by deterritorializing and reterritorializing perspectives in ways the state or the hegemonic common sense would wish to marginalize" (2004:274). *Crimson Gold* also provides a deterritorialized perception, as it makes visible an alternative world's dimension, affording the possibility to see, be and understand existence from the Other's point of view. By setting the image's exteriorizing motion, the movie displays another perspective that allows the spectator to go through a different experience of his social environment.

Thus, Panahi's film exemplifies the deterritorializing image's potentiality in terms of a movement disrupting fixed standpoints, leading to other world's spheres, and presenting new forms of perceiving with a possible sociopolitical outcome. Through its main character's viewpoint, the Iranian filmmaker offers a variation within society and presents its other sides, establishing a connection with Deleuze's *The image-movement* (1986) conception, about the movement's two facets²⁷. "On one hand, that which happens between objects or parts; on the other hand that, which expresses the duration or the whole" (11). The movement refers to displacing relationships or vibrations occurring between diverse elements that maintain the whole's shift as a duration in time. It "expresses the changing of the whole in relation to the objects and is itself a mobile section of duration" (Deleuze 1986:11).

²⁷ Deleuze's movement analysis comes from his interpretation of Bergson's main thesis about the subject.

Through the movement-image, particular becomings deterritorialize perception and reveal the whole's shift

Now, the cinema's images are the most language for the movement's duality. "The shot is movement considered from this dual point of view: the translation of the parts of a set which spreads out in space, the change of a whole which is transformed in duration." (Deleuze 1986:19). The cinematographic image connects the specific components in motion inside a scene with a wider fluctuation. "The shot is the movement-image In so far as it relates movement to a whole which changes" (Deleuze 1986:22). Something it accomplishes as it "constantly puts bodies, parts, aspects, dimensions, distances and the respective positions of the bodies which make up a set in the image into variation" (Deleuze 1986:23).

In this manner, the movement-image is the expression of a mobile section in the whole's constant shift, making up the temporal perspective of its momentary formation (Deleuze 1986). It provides a vision of the duration's continuous re-configuration while keeping its pieces on a visible alteration. Therefore, the films also have the formal capacity to provide the empirical contact with the exact instant, among other infinite instants, where the whole changes into unknown terrains and perspectives through the contagious meeting and posterior transformation of its constitutive elements and/or subjects, e.g. a becoming.

In this order of ideas, *The Shape of Water* (2017), *Ponyo* (2008) and *A Scene at the Sea* (1991) are fitting examples of the image-movement's duplicity. Since they display the diverse modifications between characters and items within the ensemble of a story, they are the scenario of the passage into ulterior forms of becoming. As this inner movement happens, these works express a specific mobile section if considered in relation to the transformation in the whole, which is no other thing than the becoming itself. They depict the deterritorializing relationships among subjects, conveying a motion that extends into various becomings as segments of the general variation process. Bearing in mind that becoming-animal, becoming-child and becoming-imperceptible are transformations that come along with a different way of perceiving other milieux, then the three films' deterritorializing potentiality comes at last from the fact they open the threshold into the experience of the duration's multiple angles.

At this point, it is inevitable not to draw a comparative line with Walter Benjamin's notion of art as a medium of reflection for knowledge's endless connections, explained in his

doctoral dissertation *The Concept of Criticism in German Romanticism* (2002). On one side, art is the space containing numerous reverberating components in a structured relationship that results in and from creative practice. On the other, it is the manifestation of an unlimited potential to connect thoughts, objects, and sensations. Such expression expands beyond the artwork itself, becoming the mirror between two unmeasurable realities that reflect on each other: the human being's intellection and the universe's continuous proliferation. To the German thinker, art is the medium as a form for incessant encounters, which corresponds with the Deleuzian first movement consideration between elements on a set. At the same time, it is a medium as the intellect's gateway for immersing into reality's relentless changes and associations, e.g. the whole's duration. Through this second aspect, the work of art gains a transcendental ontological and political significance as it unveils several perceptual discernment's levels.

Even though Benjamin thought of the German Romanticism when he referred to the art's dual quality as a medium, his conception helps to elucidate the distinctive relation Deleuze proposes between films, movement, transformation, and the whole. This complex connection is the core to understand into what extent the cinematographic experience relates to the becoming itself. Insofar as the cinema's movement-images are the medium-formal-space for subjects' becoming and the medium-threshold leading to perceive everything as a segment of the duration's constant reconfiguration with its heterogeneous faces and perspectives.

To sum up, the three movie samples provide an experience that connects in two ways with the Deleuzian process of becoming. On the one hand, as the first chapter showed, they contain particular forms of becoming with their corresponding parts. On the other, as a shift takes place, they reveal the possibility of a wider and general motion comprising infinite elements and variations. Since every becoming carries a change of environment and its perceptive understanding, the films disclose a brief impression of the duration through some of its diverse facets. By doing so, they exert a deterritorialization on humankind's conventional point-of-view. That which on the more basic, daily experiences defines humanity is in suspense in the presence of the whole's multiplicity with its countless different perspectives.

If *Crimson Gold*'s deterritorializing images provide the awareness of another social life's perspective, they remain on the human sphere encompassing none of the character's

further becoming. In contrast, the works object of this analysis, through their specific becomings, encompass their characters going through a change of milieu, and the consequent alteration in perception, beyond the human being's essential definition. Their movement-images display Nature's involutive creations, the plane of immanence (Deleuze and Guattari 2005; Deleuze 1986:90), taking both the stories' subjects and the movies' spectators outside their regular world's conceptions and configurations, thus providing a powerful deterritorializing/contagious sensation dislocated from the anthropocentric attitude. Here is where the rich formal and technical cinematographic aspects reinforce the transformation happening inside the narrative and give a deterritorialized experience out of humankind's viewpoint.

2.2 *The Shape of Water*: the deterritorialized perception of human nature and the social Otherness

The previous chapter considered how Guillermo del Toro's two main characters' relationship in *The Shape of Water* (2017) leads to a becoming-animal. For Elisa's affective alliance with the amphibian creature drives her through a corporal and inner deterritorialization from her human form. A transformation that implies the transition and involvement with the deterritorializing subject's mindset and milieu. Thus, within the film, becoming-animal is a phenomenon that displays a different perception and understanding of reality through what the heroine is experiencing as she becomes and distances from her humanity.

The aquatic milieu

Elisa's shift brings the spectator to perceive from a radical dissimilar perspective in two senses. First, the one that results from the human being approaching and merging into an aquatic creature's ambiance. An experience that the movement-image insinuates since the beginning. For the establishing shot, as the camera fades in, shows how "we float at the bottom of a river. Surrounded by water. Fish swim away. Debris floating in the water. And,

then, a lamp floats by. A coffee pot. A shoe (...). Camera pushes and we see: An entire apartment underwater.” (del Toro and Taylor 2016:1). From the introductory scenes, the director displaces the anthropic point-of-view of his quotidian environment as the image flows with a submerged depiction of the heroine’s home (*The Shape of Water* 2017).

Throughout the sequence, the camera moves as a constitutive part of the watery habitat, offering the aspect of its flowing, divergent configuration. Del Toro explains how, “the camera language, which is very mobile (...) has to be graduated in order to do the robbery, so that the film does not feel like a series of little squares linked to each other but like a flow” (2018:28). Later on, it returns to this complete immersive-motion experience for other two sequences: the moment Elisa and the amphibian flood her bathroom to be together, and in the denouement, where the creature saves her under the river. Similar to the initial flooded viewpoint in which “objects and furniture float, gently suspended, defying gravity.” (del Toro and Taylor 2016:1), each of these film’s moments underwater carefully conveys with ambitious images²⁸, what it would be like for a deterritorialized human being to move and exist on a different milieu.

In addition, the aquatic world’s depictions associate with other components such as varied shots, the composing lines, the color, the light, and the music; thus reinforcing the distinctive image-movement’s flux through the water. *The Shape of Water*’s montage of the underwater stage with its various takes is the architecture of the new milieu’s composition. The image’s edition communicates its multiple layers, since “an open take (...) has to tell you something, and in a medium take you discover things that didn’t exist in the open take. In the close-up there have to be elements that make it interesting in a different way” (del Toro 2018:28). In this sense, the assembled movement-images show an altered reality through which the whole’s duration becomes perceivable. As Deleuze states the “montage is the determination of the whole” (1986:29)²⁹.

²⁸ “The images are very ambitious, and there is a beautiful trick we used. There are three moments underwater and one of them we filmed submerged in a swimming pool. But the other two needed an absolute control of the elements, so we shot them with a very old technique called wet for dry, or dry for wet. It’s a theatre technique where the set is filled with smoke and the light of water is projected on to it and everything is shot in slow motion tied with wires so things can be coordinated.” (del Toro 2008:28)

²⁹ Beyond these spatial nuances, the montage becomes an indirect image of time, of the duration. “Montage is the operation which bears on the movement-images to release the whole from them, that is, the image of time” (Deleuze 1986:29).

The lines and colors offer as well the feeling of being in an entirely unusual place with its own dynamics. As del Toro describes what he attempted in *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006), “those elements are not there for beauty; they have a narrative sense. The real world is straight lines and diagonals, (...) and it is all a series of cold colours” (del Toro 2018:29). In *The Shape of Water*'s case, the director also depicts the quotidian life outside the water with straight lines and diagonals in an accentuated rustic-grey tone. In contrast, the watery environment gains its impactful and disruptive sensation from the blue and green palette and the mix of curved edges with determined high or low-angle takes. Moreover, this submarine perception imitates for the viewer an underwater displacement with its constant but subtle shifting positions and the objects out of sharp.

The light and the music carry out the final accentuation regarding the dissimilarity with the daily life's configuration. For the aquatic milieu's composition is a continuous fluctuation in harmony with the camera's motion. Paraphrasing the movie score's composer Alexandre Desplat, del Toro explains how for him “The camera moves like water and the music has to flow like water” (2018:30). As for the light, the filmmaker sets the disparity by displaying the human's reality with “one-source of illumination (...). And the rest are bouncing and crossed lights in order to detach with a line of light a thin ridge” (del Toro 2018:29). While the spectator's familiar surroundings only present a faint brightness, the undersea realm's takes seem to spread light in multiple directions, completing in a symbolic style the escape out of conventional world experiences.

As a result, those formal components work together to display a mobile thorough perspective of an unknown environment. They allow the spectator to move through it, and to discover its entire contour as he accompanies Elisa's own transformation. Likewise, “the composition of movement-images always presents the image of time in its two aspects: time as interval and time as whole” (Deleuze 1986:48). The film's arrangement reinforces the becoming embedded within the narrative's duration and opens the threshold to the viewer's deterritorialized perception of existence through one of its numerous faces.

The film gives a detailed representation of the system Elisa will inhabit because of her shift. Furthermore, from the human mindset represented through the heroine, the heterogeneous living organism brings up the differences and similarities in the manner he

perceives and interacts with his surroundings. An understating that starts with the story's character but with the ability to extend to the public. Therefore, when faced with the creature, Elisa cannot help but ask herself a fundamental question. When she demands her neighbor about the human's definition (The shape of Water 2017), she is also making explicit to the audience a problem with many ramifications that del Toro confesses has troubled him since his reading of *Frankenstein*. "I found in Shelley's novel. The human being's essential questions: what am I doing here? Why? (...) I don't understand the world, it's too big for me, it is too small. What makes me human?" (del Toro 2018:30).

This last key interrogation comes from the displaced recognition of an ambience without gravity and words but with other ways to communicate. As the movie's experience represents new empirical settings in a different milieu, it remembers a principle of basic biology in which the exchange that living beings have with their environment is paramount for the way they move, shape, think and express their selves. Del Toro's amphibian leading role appears as a reliable proof of that and confronts the well-known and accepted conception that defines humanity's nature from exclusive distinctive traits such as language, consciousness, or feelings.

For instance, the film dwells on and widens, a philosophical appreciation about the direct rapport existing between the humans' languages and landscapes. A thought Jean Jacques Rousseau developed and argued in his *Essay about the Origin of Languages* (1997). According to him, the weather and climatological circumstances on different parts of the planet explain and justify the origin and modifications of the human being's languages with its diverse forms and dictions. However, the movie offers the possibility to judge this relationship away from the narrow anthropological focus. Since the amphibian creature, due to the configuration of the aquatic milieu in which he lives, has another way to communicate emotions and thoughts without words through signs and movements. Then as he experiences the change into the human's atmosphere, he learns how to adapt them to 'converse' with Elisa.

Thus, as Joshi concludes on his critical essay about del Toro's previous features' spiritual depiction, the director "challenges viewers of his films to consider alternate worldviews or cosmologies" (2015:20). In this sense, *The Shape of Water* allows understanding this other environment's own empiric conditions and presents several

interrogations about the essential meaning of being human, therefore causing a deterritorialization beyond the narrative content³⁰. For the contrasting flowing movement-images displaying the vivid experience of an aquatic creature's milieu, provide an odd feeling that leads back to analyze how and into what extent humankind condition and location affect the quotidian perceptions of both his essence and the world, in particular through the interaction with Nature.

Other socio-political world's perception

The second standpoint Elisa's becoming-animal displays is the one from society's minorities. Once again, it is worth noting Podalsky's scholar analysis (2014) about how, some of del Toro's films, offer a reworking of the Other and a problematization of racial hierarchies encouraging the spectator to assume the perspective of the marginalized communities. Within his latest feature, the Mexican director comes back to deal with these possibilities. Meaning that, in *The Shape of Water* the movement-image is deterritorializing the observer towards other natural environment and the social space the Otherness inhabits and signifies with his day-to-day actions. For it offers the perception of how Elisa and her closest friends feel, understand, work, and interact with the collective and the real world, outside the high-class' hegemonic and well-established traditional behavior.

For instance, several takes during the whole movie follow Elisa and her African American friend Zelda as they do the cleaners' routine shores. The camera shares a depiction assuming the point-of-view of the two working-class characters, showing how they clean equipment's rooms without knowing for sure what is in there. But neither does the audience, since the ladies' interaction, comprising Zelda's monologues while Elisa replies with occasional signs, refers to other things: anecdotes with Zelda's husband and the married life, or commentaries about men using the bathroom (*The Shape of Water* 2017).

With, in appearance, such trivial takes, the film displaces the viewer's attention from the research going on in the facility to the quotidian issues of the most often unnoticeable workers.

³⁰ It results interesting to note how del Toro suggests the film's potentiality to interrogate any creature's regular world experience through disruptive images, as there is a moment where he frames the amphibian fascinated in front of a movie in an empty theater (*The Shape of Water* 2017).

In this respect, he ends up learning more about the daily house dramas of an Afro-American cleaner, than he does of the top-secret military groundbreaking investigations taking place in the laboratory. During these scenes, instead of perceiving reality through the scientific dominant scope, the moviegoer sees and understands its other social pressing matters through the eyes and words of Zelda.

The realization about other life's perception, beyond the Western, logo-centric, practical attitude, also comes from the movie's portrayal of Elisa's dispositions towards the amphibian. She personifies a way to be in the world associated with a sympathetic sensibility and with Nature's conception in a non-utilitarian form. Here, as the spectator perceives the heroine's relation with her environment and with other living beings, he is experiencing a different political posture in society. As Smith (2019:44) argues, through Elisa's character "we listen to and develop a sense of empathy for the "other," rather than just consider it an object", which leads to the consideration that, "we need to move from an I-It to an I-thou relationship with the world, acknowledging its intelligence and soul".

Another example of how the movement-images depicting secondary roles in the film may provide a deterritorialized socio-political consciousness is the neighbor. Gilles is the misunderstood artist struggling to get acknowledgment for his work. Through this facet of his character, he displays to what extent a sensible, tender, emotive approach and representation of life does not always receive proper recognition in a pragmatic society. The practical exigencies of industry and marketing cut short his world's vision, longing to express the human being's creative capacity. Nonetheless, he escapes to the figurative imprisonment of having to paint the ideal family model, as he meets the creature and, out of his dazzled observation, draws him (*The Shape of Water* 2017). In this way, Gilles foreshadows the figure of the poet reaffirming the existence's sublime dimension through the artistic expression deprived of any commercial value.

The neighbor's identity as a homosexual living in the shadows of an intolerant community, adds up to the African American, the mute girl, and the amphibian as an embodiment of the Otherness (del Toro 2017). They all are the activist representation and/or figuration of marginalized minorities. With their presence throughout the film, they bear the

standpoint of the civil other and give a plausible experience of how people from these diverse collectivities see, understand and act within a segregating society.

Therefore, the way the motion picture depicts characters from minority groups surviving in a decade of gender and racial discriminations, unwavering machismo and political fear from anyone who seems or acts on the fringe of the traditional North American values, gives an opportunity to distinguish reality from their oppressed position. Like this, del Toro's feature conveys a different viewpoint of society's avatars to remember that it is as valid as the conventional one, while also serving as a mirror for nowadays discriminating societies and bureaucratic parties. In conclusion, alongside the anomalous experience of the subaquatic milieu, *The Shape of Water* earns the disruptive potential to take the spectator into the borderline of his everyday world's definition to perceive it from a thorough dissimilar perspective.

2.3 *Ponyo* and the deterritorialized perception of the adult's world

On Hayao Miyazaki's *Ponyo on the Cliff by the Sea* (2008) the first chapter showed how the contagious encounter between a goldfish and a five-year-old kid culminates with the former's becoming-girl. For Ponyo's direct contact with the little boy's blood causes her involutive deterritorialization, shifting into a human from her previous fishlike shape. A transformation that happens alongside the unleashing of a movement that takes her from the bottom of the sea where she lives to the lighthouse by the rock face where Sosuke does. This section will now focus on the perceptive implications of this change of milieu, which comes along the physical one. It analyses the meaning of the film's becoming-child, in terms of a deterritorialized perspective of adulthood's daily life.

The contagious experience of imagination

Miyazaki's animation stands as a vivid depiction of Hans Christian Andersen's *Little Mermaid* main point of contrast between two worlds. It emphasizes the differentiated

sensation between “the sea, symbolizing magic and childhood, and the land, representing reality and adulthood” (Ross 2014:20). According to this author, in the original fantastic tale from the Danish writer,

...when the point of view shifts to the mermaids, who cannot wait to see the land
(...) our familiar world becomes the magical and exotic one. We are asked to be
estranged from our familiar world, reawakened to the wonders of the familiar; to
recognize that ordinary and extraordinary can change places with a change of the
gaze. Only then can we fully understand his heroine’s desire to enter our world.
(Ibid)

However, the particularity with the Japanese filmmaker’s feature lies in the fact the spectator has the lifelike possibility to experience those wonders of his familiar world through the animated form of the movement-image. As Lamarre (2002:335) points out, “even hand drawing can be more rather than less internally realistic: shaded and richly paletted to suggest depth, and fully animated (twelve drawings per second) to suggest fluidity of movement”. With this film entirely made by hand, exposing “an uncluttered and neatly defined visual style that is elegant and fresh” (Odell and Le Blanc 2010)³¹, Miyazaki achieves a brilliant illustration of the contrasting realities.

During the opening sequence, the point of view moves around the marvelous space beneath the waves where countless animals interact and gather by Ponyo’s father side (*Ponyo* 2008). Jellyfish, goldfish and all other types of crustacean forms, swim and behave under the ocean’s dynamic logic. Thru the initial minute, the movie’s thorough animation expresses the most often unseen spectacles taking place in the submerged Nature’s scenario. Afterward, when the goldfish’s metamorphosis occurs, the images unveil the sea’s incommensurable power and shows once again its fantastic living beings in a vivid, naturalistic manner. Because of this treatment, “the sea itself becomes a central character in the film, lashing out or rolling gently in as expressive a way as any of the humans or creatures” (Odell and Le Blanc 2010).

³¹ These same two authors highlight how “this is one of Miyazaki’s most ambitious projects. [Since] In order to realise this aesthetic Miyazaki turned his back on CGI entirely, relying instead on traditional means of animating the film. The result was that about 170,000 animation cells were used in the production – a staggering amount that surpassed the numbers used on his previous films”

After the introductory glittering sea's images, the movie depicts the adults' existence on the shore devoid of imagination. It exhibits the ordinary life of a small Japanese fish town by the coast (*Ponyo* 2008). Yet, Sosuke's presence, as the first human to appear in the shot hints the childhood's imaginative point-of-view entering this repetitive reality to put it under another lens. As the previous chapter analyzed, if it was not for the contagious meeting between the boy and the goldfish, the opposing phenomena will remain far apart. For the moment Ponyo's becoming unleashes the pond's primitive force, the sea creatures' movement pervades the frame, prefiguring the tsunami through which the human being's commonplace undergoes the encounter with the aquatic environment and its original configuration (*Ponyo* 2008).

The outcome is the environments' accurate representation offers a mimetic image of reality while "bringing the magical, the spiritual and the fantastical into very real and detailed worlds" (Odell and Le Blanc 2010). As a result, throughout *Ponyo*'s animated forms, the audience gets the opportunity to shift between the spectrum of his quotidian milieu, the land, and the empiric involvement with the extraordinary aspects of an underwater realm.

The effect is that the animation feels right – it feels alive and organic. Miyazaki's desire to make a film that would appeal to and be understood by someone the same age as his five-year-old hero is evident not only in the fantastical story but in this simple and naturalistic style. (Odell and Le Blanc 2010)

With a paradox two-way movement, Miyazaki's film displays the becoming-child of the story's character going from the whimsical sea animal kingdom to the ordinary human world. A process that is making "the unseen world crash into ours when Ponyo escapes her ocean-bound confines" (Odell and Le Blanc 2010). Like this, it achieves a peculiar effect in which the spectator feels and enters the magical viewpoint of Ponyo's aquatic space. Through the goldfish's amazed gaze of the human milieu, he can juxtapose this dreamlike sensitivity with his own reality. Thus, the film exerts the viewer's deterritorialization into a fantastic childhood-like standpoint of his otherwise pedestrian daily life's perception.

Ponyo's becoming-child allows her, as the deterritorialized heterogeneity, to observe and be in the human's adult world with a unique childish fascination. "She reacts to everything in an inquisitive manner, without fear, just as children growing up examine the world around

them” (Odell and Le Blanc 2010). Hence, she represents the point of contact and merging between such antithetical attitudes in resonance with the clash’s depiction of the water and the land. Here lies the complete sense of becoming going beyond the plain definition of a pure metamorphose; for it is about experiencing what a change of milieu brings in terms of perception, understanding, and, in time, the corporal adaption.

Furthermore, the animated movement-image is the formal element that leads this perceptive focus of the world through the eyes of a child outside the story. Ross recalls how the proper Miyazaki once pointed out the enormous advantages of the animation. Praising the achievements of early Disney films, he acknowledged “their creative use of point of view (as in the flying scene in 1953’s *Peter Pan*) and for their depiction of nature in motion (as in *The Old Mill* in 1937, a clear influence on *Ponyo*)” (2014:19). In *Ponyo* (2008), he combines in a genius and hasty manner those two elements. The goldfish’s point of view offers the innovative sense and perspective of a creature from another facet of Nature’s motion. Then, as the protagonist’s shift happens, the perspective readapts and sheds the light of the earlier captivation and motion into the human milieu, on and off the screen.

The fascinated childhood perspective bringing the power of imagination into the pragmatic reality, such is the deterritorialized experience *Ponyo*’s movement-images offer during the story. “Miyazaki has been more successful (...) in exploring with his audiences how imagination can best be integrated into a fulfilling life away from the screen” (Ross 2014:19). This film, thus, achieves the contagious experience of imagination beyond the screen and into real life.

As humankind’s daily world, expressed within the film, combines with the aquatic environment’s magical characteristics, it becomes a prism reflecting the child’s contemplation and involvement with quotidian objects, actions and relationships. “This accommodation conceived in terms of the connection between two worlds, subtly instructs viewers on the uses of imagination” (Ross 2014:20). *Ponyo*’s becoming offers the deterritorialized experience of considering the most basic and repetitive of the grown-up human’s daily actions through an amazed and more imaginative disposition.

Contrary to the deterritorialization of the dominant, established Natural and sociopolitical perspectives examined in *The Shape of Water* example, *Ponyo* shifts adulthood’s

ordinary and realistic bias of reality's perception. In this sense, bringing imagination into a well-known and practical pre-conception of the world strengthens other abundant perceptive deterritorializations running through the film. First, the caring approach towards every living being and environment that comes with the becoming-girl's feminine perspective Ponyo is also experiencing.

Second, Grannamare and Sosuke's mom extend and nuance the previous perspective as they represent the world's maternal treatment and leadership. They are the feminine strong characters always knowing what to do and keeping the world from falling into pieces. Thanks to the way they perceive and understand things, it is possible to solve the contradictions and unbalances that human actions cause to Nature's phenomena. Therefore, by depicting how those characters confront the story's setbacks from a different angle than the rooted patriarchal one embodied in Fujimoto, Miyazaki's film also "infuses the audience with a bright outlook for the future" (Wu 2016:190).

Third, in a meta-fictional implicit level, these deterritorialized perceptions resulting from *Ponyo*'s animation might take the spectator to appreciate defining Japanese artistic and cultural traits. Napier's argument of Miyazaki and Studio Ghibli's "desire to make Japanese anime a 'site of implicit cultural resistance' to American hegemony" (2005:9); leads Ross to sustain that "the simpler—or cruder and flatter—style of Japanese anime could be claimed to be a deliberate effort to establish an independent cultural identity" (2014:19). Thus, *Ponyo*'s contagious experiences of imaginative, feminine and maternal-caring perspectives lead to the ulterior Japanese's anime and cultural affirmation against a stereotypical Disney-like western cultural influence. The film's ulterior deterritorializing consequence is the inner potentiality to display and make perceivable some Japanese cultural characteristics with a correspondent animation style.

2.4 *A Scene at the sea*: What does it mean to perceive the imperceptible?

Takeshi Kitano's *A Scene at the Sea* (1991) brings the sea's deterritorializing attraction to the furthest of the human being's shifting possibilities. The film develops the young

Shigeru's process of becoming-imperceptible after he has felt the irresistible calling of the ocean's incommensurability and its perennial time. Despite the simplicity of the story, describing the protagonist's attempts to learn how to surf in the company of his devoted girlfriend, the movement-images express the peculiar emotion the main character has for the sea and his further change of reality.

Because of the affective alliance, he enters the water and starts his deterritorialization towards the metaphysical milieu of the unnoticeable. Meaning, as the final scenes suggest, that he loses himself in the waves as a small indiscernible particle in Nature's vastness. Thus, in this case, the cinema's formal composition approaches its biggest potentiality to deterritorialize the perception. For Kitano's contrasting scenes and sequences unfold the way humankind may discern and reach the imperceptible duration of the whole.

The perception of Nature's infinite filigree

The movie starts with an establishing silent shot of the sea on the horizon. As it cuts to the subsequent shot of Shigeru, it establishes that the opening sea's image comes from his point-of-view. While he is observing the seascape in the distance, another cut displays the face's close-up, suggesting the inner-emotions' torrent that the vast body of liquid is exerting in him from this initial gaze (*A scene at the sea* 1991)³². During this sequence, the first take conveys the sentiment of the ocean's intriguing indefinability for the viewer, making him experience it through the deterritorialized subject standpoint. The brief and noiseless introductory shot of the massive body of water provokes, at least, the odd feeling of being in the presence of something beyond humankind's conceptual frame of reference.

A sensation that posterior shots and sequences will work on and amplify to unveil other puzzling traits of the deterritorializing subject within the story, e.g. the sea. Hence, the film adds up its mighty fluidity to the first quiet elusiveness. Beginning with the parallel traveling shots capturing the shoreline panoramic from the land (*A Scene at the Sea* 1991) and insinuating the notorious contrast between the human and the sea's motion. Then, with the

³² As the previous chapter pointed out, this is the precise moment where the sea's irresistible calling causes the affective bond that will eventually deterritorialize Shigeru into the imperceptible.

reiterative scenes of multiple characters surfing the waves (*A Scene at the Sea* 1991), the image-movement displays the eye-catching sea's perpetual motion. In this way, the movie affords the experience of "fluid mobility, identified with the absorbing film screen characterizes Kitano's perception of the sea" (Karatsu 2013:630).

Finally, insofar as the film plays with multiple shots, angles, focus, and viewpoints of the sea's constant shift, always in relation to the characters, it brings to the surface a third anomalous sensation. The glimpse of an almost undetectable, if considered from the human regular perceptive disposition, long-term formal and temporal alterability. Whereas the sea and Nature's entire configuration transform at a bewildering pace in comparison with the human being's existence, *A Scene at the Sea*'s movement-images provide the momentary experience of this complex dynamic.

Kitano's film presents to the spectator the empiric possibility to grasp reality's imperceptible defining traits, I.e. indefinability, fluidity, alterability, and duration. Qualities that the story's protagonist experienced from the initial shot and that led him towards his peculiar becoming-imperceptible, disappearing inside the sea. For Shigeru's deterritorialization is a disassembling of his individuality within those boundless aspects of the whole. As Karatsu states, "the seascape resonates in the film in an attempt (...) to come to terms with new kinds of identity, which are not fixed or permanent, but are fluid and open to change" (2013:632). Likewise, Gerow considered how Kitano's cinema "interrogates the dual shock and pleasure experienced on the threshold of the loss of identity" (1999:114).

Nevertheless, beyond the character's deterritorialization and loss of identity, the image-movement sets a wider contrast between the perspective of the sea's compound features and the human's significant attributes. It unfolds an unease experience of the world's thickness similar to what Camus described it in *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Paraphrasing the French philosopher, the sentiment of the absurd sometimes lies in the perception of the world's strangeness. A glimpse that allows understanding into what extent a rock is an irreducible foreigner; and how humanity endures an intense denial in the face of Nature or a landscape. To him, the absurd is the ephemeral awareness that in the bottom all beauty contains something inhuman; which leads to the loss of the illusory human sense holding the world together (Camus 1989:26).

From the establishing shot, going through every other sea's take, Kitano's film offers the amplifying experience of its unnoticeable elements. As it does, the human being's perception suffers the ultimate deterritorialization towards an overwhelming strangeness' sensation. That Nature's kingdoms and environments run and function with slight aspects escaping humankind's quotidian narrow viewpoint. The only difference with Camus' sentiment of the absurd coming after such realization is that throughout the film the sea becomes an open invitation to become-imperceptible and understand existence from other perspectives.

Therefore, on the one hand, the movement-image displays throughout the story the way Shigeru experiences the sea's heterogeneous characteristics and then loses himself within them. On the other, it becomes the threshold allowing the ocean's contagious qualities to transcend beyond the screen and to interrogate the spectator. Within *A Scene at the Sea*, the deterritorialized subject's change of milieu displaces the spectator's perception towards the duration's infinite and subtle filigree³³.

For the audience, this unexpected movement bursts into several previously unknown experiences. Its significance comes from the fact it implies a probable understanding of what used to be unnoticed. Like Gerow argues:

The Kitano dream is a vision we desire, offering us (...) the opportunity to experience an empty liminality, to tread the boundaries between Self and Other, the domestic and the foreign, life and death, violence and comedy, motion and stillness. It provides spectators the chance to "become nothing," of existing, however temporarily, between realms of definition and identity before returning to their oppressive realities. (1999: 112-113)

To become-imperceptible, to become-nothing, such is *A Scene at the Sea's* deterritorializing potentiality. It takes the character within the story and the spectator to a new sensitive terrain in which the duration's most faint elements become perceivable. With the same movement, it disassembles the individuality into a particle among the duration's fluidity,

³³ Once again, it appears a correlation with Walter Benjamin's way to conceive the dual medium character of the work of art (2002).

alterability, and indefinability. Hence, this final form of becoming involves the shift towards the whole as a milieu conveying its own temporal perspective and modulation.

In this sense, Kitano's movie add up to the other deterritorializing examples of the human standpoint. Whether it is by *The Shape of Water*'s environmental/aquatic and the Otherness' socio-political perspective, *Ponyo*'s childhood gaze into the quotidian life, or *A Scene at the Sea*'s experience of the imperceptible; the films' formal aspects contribute to the immersive understanding of diverse milieus and perceptions beyond an anthropic position. They prove to what extent the use of the movement-images formal aspects work as a contagious experience of the multiple facets of becoming itself and its corresponding shifting perspectives. The cinematographic use of shots, camera angles, movements, and editing, allow a conscious experience of diverse environmental, political and existential viewpoints, which expresses the whole's duration with its constant transformations.

CHAPTER 3. Final considerations: The cinema's anomalous position and its philosophical contagion

3.1 The relationship between cinema and philosophy

Throughout the previous chapters, the research established the way the three sample movies relate with the philosophical notion of becoming itself running through everything. The movement-image double potentiality to depict the subjectivities' heterogeneous relations and transformations within the story, while displaying a deterritorializing experience of diverse milieus and perspectives to the audience unveils cinema's anomalous position for a philosophical contagion. Whether by their narrative contents and/or their formal and technical aspects, the films proved to be a source to sense and think those "involution of creative" (Deleuze and Guattari 2005:238) progressions without hierarchy pervading reality.

Cinema's contents and form both encompass and display the process of becoming itself in all its complexity. As they do, they provide a variety of discernment's levels whose perception interrogates general and scholarly audience in several directions. In this sense, the cinematographic experience goes beyond the plain representation or overlapping of a determined philosophical concept along with the narrative. Once a film displays on the screen the peculiar relationships between heterogeneous subjectivities, even though depicting the Deleuzian notion of becoming, it becomes as well a point of contagion in a double sense. First, departing from a particular shift, it is the threshold displaying the multiple experiences of the whole's duration and its continuous re-configurations³⁴. In the second place, because of this previous contagion that leads to perceive and think the world from different perspectives, it positions itself in between its definition as a work of art and the prolific philosophical ground it conveys.

³⁴ Such is the Deleuzian conception according to which the cinema's movement-images make up an indirect image of time (1986).

On this subject, Alain Badiou's conference *El cine como experimentación filosófica*³⁵ (2004), serves as a thought-provoking referent. Inscribed in the same line of Deleuzian thinking about the film, Badiou also considers it a special dimension of time, adding up its capability to present the audience with apparent oppositions. In the French thinker's consideration, cinema is a philosophical situation, for it shows a relation among terms that would not regularly maintain one (2004:23).

According to Badiou (2004), such an encounter between heterogeneous elements happening within the film allows thinking about the occurrence and the exception, what is rare for the human being, and life's change. Thus, cinema's philosophical situations make up an experience that synthesizes philosophy's main activities. First, to enlighten thought's fundamental choices through an understanding of the level of concern about opposing matters. Second, to make aware of the distance between thought, truth and power and to know whether is possible to trespass the conventional with a creative/transgressor thinking. Third, to disclose thoroughly the value of the rupture between the event and the exception (2004: 26-27).

The philosophical thinking, as an organic part of life, is a bond holding together the three actions: election, distance, and exception (Badiou 2004:27). Furthermore, it is in the dialectic between continuity and rupture where life signals the time for philosophy and its decisions (2004:49). Within this logic, the movement-image's particular situations allow as well to sense, think and therefore give meaning to life's countless changes, precisely by being in the rupture that makes them happen. In this regard, the cinematographic experience reaches the contemporary status Giorgio Agamben defined in his essay *What is the Contemporary?* as the possibility to perceive the present time's broken backbone finding ourselves in the exact point of the fracture (2009:47).

Hence, rather than establishing a relationship of knowledge in which philosophy thinks and talks about cinema, this experience leads to a shifting and alive connection between them. As long as the movies display such peculiar encounters and situations, they transform philosophy by transforming the proper notion of the idea (Badiou 2004). Cinema is the creation of a new idea providing the chance to experience and understand its own dynamic and configuration as it comes to life. A definition that links it with Gilles Deleuze and Felix

³⁵ *Cinema as philosophic experimentation.*

Guattari's idea of philosophy in *What is Philosophy?* For them, its fundamental meaning resides in being the art of forming, inventing, and fabricating concepts (1994:2).

Therefore, this final chapter constitutes a briefly endeavor to illustrate the different ways in which the cinematographic experience works as an anomalous deterritorializing agent to unfold an authentic³⁶ philosophical thinking with its possible existential, ontological, political –ethical–, artistic and cultural implications for the human being's daily experiences. It is also a contribution to the analysis of contemporary cinema's place and potentiality regarding multidisciplinary fields –e.g. sociology, anthropology, politics, and aesthetics–.

3.2 Cinema's philosophical situations for sociopolitical and cultural approaches

The three studied films afford the intellectual/philosophical experience of sociopolitical and cultural ruptures. Whereas they depict and expand the meeting of heterogeneous characters and perceptions out of the ordinary, they disclose and shed light into a differentiating breach that hegemonic thinking commonly obliterates. As Deleuze and Guattari remark:

There is an entire politics of becomings-animal, (...) which is elaborated in assemblages that are neither those of the family nor of religion nor of the State. Instead, they express minoritarian groups, or groups that are oppressed, prohibited, in revolt, or always on the fringe of recognized institutions (2005:247).

Hence, the forms of becoming in the films provide the vertiginous sensation of standing in the dislocation between the accepted world's understanding and the possibility of structuring it in a valid, truthful way from other perspectives. The spectator who dares to follow his own thoughts from the anomaly he experienced with the film, distances himself from established ordering categories while developing their critic knowledge and assessment.

³⁶ The word authentic in this context refers back to Kant's (1790) exigency for a sovereign discernment. Even though it points to the *sapere aude* as a guiding disposition for the subject to think for himself, it does not convey the Enlightenment's anthropocentric bias to make of the human being the rational measure of the world. In this sense, authentic philosophical thinking means an autonomous disposition to perceive and understand reality beyond the alleged univocal humankind approach.

At the end of this separation, arises the quintessential philosophical attitude: the captious interrogation. Hereafter, the experience of becoming itself running through and beyond the analyzed films sets the ground for a nowadays compulsory questioning. The examination of the logic behind relationships of power that define, categorize and reduce sociopolitical and cultural plurality in the world according to the dominant class' accepted paradigms and standards.

The becoming-animal's implications

The deterritorializing encounter between Elisa and the amphibian in *The Shape of Water* (2017) makes up a philosophical situation, for it unveils inherent dichotomies within the society's political and cultural order. The heroine epitomizes and makes visible segregated minorities without an active voice in a technocratic world. She is the presence of the Otherness traditionally excluded from the public and democratic, active participation. Whether it is from the gender perspective or the middle and low-class struggle in the economic world, she incarnates the recognition of a plurality always running underneath the governing administrative hierarchies inside society.

Then, alongside Elisa's closest circle of friends –the African American and the homosexual – comes the recognition of an alternative political standpoint facing the predominant male, white, heterosexual pattern that has always defined and structured the social world according to its particular interests. With Elisa, Zelda, and Gilles, the film opens up the rupture in the intrinsic apparent logic of liberal democracies. Thus, in a time of xenophobic-nationalists governments, white supremacy's speeches, machismo violence and all other intolerances against sexual Rights, liberty of cult, and environmentalism; the motion pictures stand up to claim art's sensitive and philosophical potential. If in previous centuries, writers and thinkers divulged through their works the refined questioning of their epoch's pressing matters³⁷, nowadays is contemporary cinema who upholds the power of art to

³⁷ For instance, the master's degree seminar *Anthropofagies* from Professor Jonathan Pollock at the University of Perpignan, analyses how cannibalism references in determined passages of the works of Montaigne, Rabelais and Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, are a form to interrogate and assume a position in the time's debate about the culture of native American tribes. Which was a refined endeavor to contribute to the religious argument between Catholicism and Protestantism regarding the act of the communion as an act of eating God's corpse.

interrogate and shift the hegemonic sociopolitical order through the vivid experience of the Otherness.

As for the amphibian in the leading role, his presence incarnates recent scholarly studies and inquiries about the multiple lessons Nature and non-human animals offer to the human being's biased conception of the world. The anthropocentric attitude, established from the Copernican revolution in the science field and the Kantian spin in the moral ground that made of humankind's ideas and habits the measurement's unity for every other living creature and thing. Del Toro's creature marks an opposition to this unilateral attribution of culture and reasoning as defining traits that only the human being possesses and develops. His artistic existence is a challenging reminder to reconsider the exclusive definitions of culture, language, and emotions. Since his cinematographic depiction and the way he exerts Elisa's deterritorialization prompts inclusive attention to the way other living beings perceive, understand, communicate and adapt their surroundings according to their needs.

Therefore, the film's main characters are a vindication of marginalized groups inside both the North American traditional sociopolitical values and the Western civilization's anthropocentric, rational paradigm of culture. By bringing them up, the image-movement opens up the adequate rupture to generate an estrangement between accepted classifications and their fringe excluded minorities. Like this, *The Shape of Water*'s becoming-animal finally brings a thoughtful distance to understand and reevaluate quotidian selective choices in politics and cultural excluding definitions.

The becoming-child's lessons

The philosophical situation that *Ponyo* (2008) presents to its spectators results from the deterritorialization the five-year-old Sosuke causes on a goldfish. Through the anomalous contagion between these heterogeneities, appears within the animated feature the contrast of two opposing worlds' views and configurations. Here, the rupture comes from the experience

Another case comes from some examples of the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth century Latin-American literature. Leopoldo Lugones' *Yzur* or Horacio Quiroga's *Juan Darien* are short tales about animals being part of the human world and culture. They make up a subtle interrogation about the Eurocentric vision considering slaves and natives as animals to exploit them at free will.

of the rare encounter between Ocean's original forces and a humans' fishing small village. However, this empiric verification unveils a further fracture in the striking divergence between childhood's fantastic perception and the adult's pragmatic position in relation to society and its daily activities.

The deterritorialized subject and main character of the story, Ponyo, bears with her a different gaze of the natural world. Thanks to her presence, the film dwells on the experience of a breathtaking animation pointing to the way animals perceive and exist in an environment without establishing damaging overexploitation rapports with it. The animated movement-image following Ponyo's viewpoint reveals itself as a suggestive window to peek into Nature's perennial motion and balance, leaving aside for a moment the human's existence.

The perceptive understanding of this discontinuity raises further inquiries about the human being's environmental behavior. Ponyo is a latent question about humankind's overwhelming presence and desire to control Nature by bending it at will to his productive-economic objectives. She is an uncomfortable truth swimming through the screen to challenge the modern era productive and economical values. The goldfish as the story's heroine is a reminder that there are other ways to inhabit and coexist in balance with Earth's natural resources. Thus, she is a defiance to acknowledge, with critical awareness, humankind's harmful utilitarian approach to Nature. An attitude based on an economic model linked to industrial growth and the constant overexploitation of natural resources.

In this sense, the presence of the other leading role, the five-year-old boy, adds up to reinforce another paramount thought. Together, Ponyo and Sosuke convey a fundamental interrogation about the adult's rapport with daily life, also spinning around productive planning. With their presence, they demand a reevaluation of the grown-up sociopolitical agenda binding economics with the scientific expertise and knowledge only applied to the production's optimization.

Thus, as the film shows the point-of-view of the children and the aquatic animal, it creates the necessary distance to question and widen this narrow, almost careless, manner of seeing, understanding and managing Nature. It infuses reality and the social world's functioning with an empathetic, selfless way of being. Through its main characters, and what they personify, the movie offers the alternative for the imagination and the fantastic. It

represents then, the dazzled observation to discover the surroundings' wonders, which leads to an artistic and creative attitude. A reminder that parallel to the productive meaning of culture – i.e. to cultivate a land – runs other one tied-up to spiritual and poetic growth in harmony with the environment.

The becoming-imperceptible's last inquiry

Finally, Shigeru's deterritorialization in *A Scene at the Sea* (1991) introduces a metaphysical and existential breach in the conceivable sociopolitical and cultural mundane order. For the human being as the main character, loses himself in the immeasurable fluidity of the sea and the eternal duration of the Universe. The water body incarnates in this context a natural and complex rhythm exceeding civilization's concerns. Hereafter, it reaches for a brief instant the experience of an unbearable grade of the unknown. The becoming running within the film reveals a glimpse of the whole's perpetual motion and re-configurations, thus shattering humankind's everyday fixed categorizations, dichotomies, parties, tendencies, and identifying ordering scales³⁸. The result of this contradictory and vertiginous feeling makes up for the philosophical situation within the film.

This metaphysical rupture appearing at the end of Shigeru's becoming, as a fundamental an undeniable interrogation about death and life's meaning, is the reason the film depicts him through trivial day-to-day actions and hobbies. For his final disappearance at the sea, marks the eventual insignificance of human activities in the presence of Nature's time. The protagonist body and self, symbolizing the human natural and cultural structured order to move, understand and transform his surroundings, disintegrates in unperceivable particles belonging to further unknown assemblages.

Thus, *A Scene at the Sea*'s philosophical situation leads to pondering one of the toughest paradoxes of the human being's conscious existence. The realization that the natural world and the universe would still be there after any individual, and even humankind as a species, cease

³⁸ In this sense the experience of the philosophical situation that the film displays, resembles Albert Camus' initial consideration in *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1989), according to which the main philosophical problem is to decide whether life is worth living. After solving this fundamental question there might come other plausible rational problems such as the constitutive dimensions of reality, or the spirit's categories.

to exist. The film's experience lastly interrogates about the transcendence and importance of the human's daily avatars, bearing in mind he inhabits a much complex order with its shifts and transforms happening at an imperceptible pace.

In this profound metaphysical and existential context, appears the becoming-imperceptible last inquiry. The question about the quintessential human definition beyond activities that reveal as ephemeral when compared to the infinite Cosmos. An awakening to reevaluate the sense of posing political and cultural dilemmas that might lead to segregating attitudes, when the principal quest in the human being's existence should be how to signify life as a brief interval in the ever-lasting duration.

3.3 Conclusions

Each of the selected films, through both their narrative and formal configuration, offers an opportunity to delve into the complexity of becoming itself. In del Toro's *The Shape of Water* (2017), the heroine undergoes a becoming-animal that displays a deterritorialized perception of the sociopolitical predominant order and the anthropocentric, technocratic and culturally selective approach to Nature. Whereas in Miyazaki's *Ponyo* (2008) the main character experiences a becoming-girl – that comes along the becoming-child –, exerting a deterritorialization from adulthood's patriarchal, realistic and utilitarian life's perspective. Finally, Kitano's *A Scene at the Sea* (1991) displays the protagonist's becoming-imperceptible – running parallel to a becoming-molecular – to unveil the whole's subtle filigree and the experience of the duration's ever-lasting shift.

Bearing in mind the analyzed peculiarities of the three processes is worth noting that they all depict anomalous and heterogeneous characters suffering affective or contagious rapports that result in a complete transformation. A variation implying a corporal and inner metamorphosis alongside a change of milieu and perception. In this respect, the film's movement-image providing an indirect image of time proves to be the most accurate art form to convey such a complex shift. For it has the potential to express, through a series of images in motion, the specific movements between subjectivities and even the exact moment of

becoming. These expressions later reveal and deploy the whole's continuous transformation, keeping it as an Opening for new elements to enter and become.

Consequently, as the cinematographic experience approaches the depiction of fluctuating rapports running through everything in Nature, it allows a deterritorialized thoughtful experience of diverse living beings' points-of-view. Hence, cinema provides the chance to see and understand the world from the Otherness perspective. Here is where it reveals its deterritorializing potential. For it has the emotional power to position its audience in the discontinuity's place as encompassed within its movement-images.

Finally, it is this movement-image's particularity, which allows sensing, thinking, and therefore giving meaning to life's countless changes, precisely because it provides the experience of the rupture that makes them happen. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the movement-image double potentiality to depict the subjectivities' heterogeneous relations and transformations within the story, while displaying a deterritorializing experience of diverse milieus and perspectives to the audience opens up the significant rupture to unveil, through the cinema's anomalous position, a philosophical contagion. From this point on, numerous essential interrogations display an autonomous thinking to give sense to life in all its magnitude.

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